

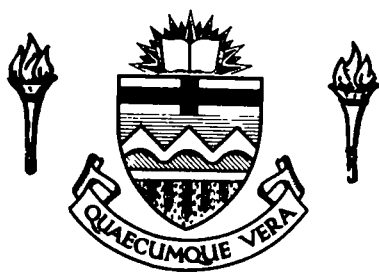
TWO  
BENNINGTON-BORN EXPLORERS  
AND  
MAKERS OF MODERN CANADA

JOHN SPARGO

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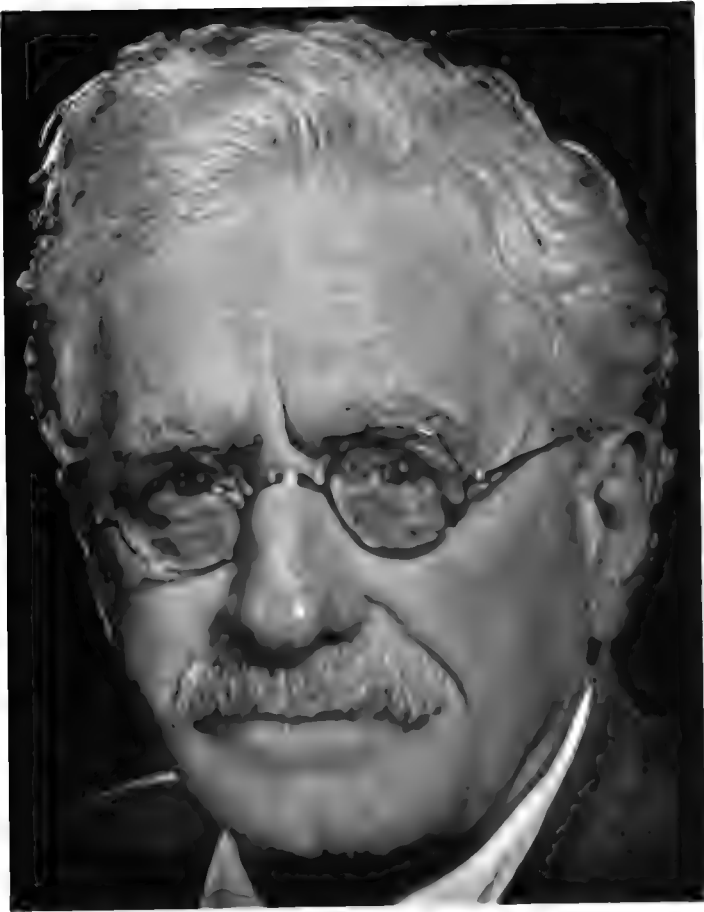


Two  
Bennington-Born Explorers  
and  
Makers of Modern Canada



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JOHN SPARGO









Two  
Bennington-Born Explorers  
and  
Makers of Modern Canada

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By JOHN SPARGO

Director-Curator of the Bennington Historical  
Museum and Art Gallery

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Illustrated

1950

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## FOREWORD

WRITING this book was a labor of love and joy. It gave me much satisfaction and pleasure to set down the life-stories of two Bennington-born men who contributed greatly to the making of that mighty nation, our neighbor, Canada. If my readers get only half as much pleasure from reading the sketches as I had in writing them, they will not have any good reason for complaining.

Aside from pleasing myself, I wrote the book to serve two groups of people. The first of these groups consists of Benningtonians, particularly of people born in Bennington or of Bennington ancestry. The second group consists of Canadians, particularly those citizens of Canada who are interested in the story of the great movement of human enterprise and adventure that spread civilization from St. Lawrence River to the Pacific.

During the forty-odd years that I have lived here, Bennington has changed greatly in common with most New England towns. That the change has been generally in the nature of betterment is my judgment. That it has comprised within it some elements that are not unmingled good, and some that are potentially evil and dangerous is, in my judgment, true and undeniable. Herein lies the challenge we dare not ignore, but must accept and answer if we are not to perish ignominiously.

An inherited consciousness of Vermont's distinctive and important contribution to the establishment and expansion of the institutions of free self-government, and to the acknowledged conception of personal rights and concomitant duties, was dominant in the population of Bennington forty years ago. There was pride in being a native of Bennington, a pride that had its roots deep in history and tradition, the saga of pioneer settlers in an untamed region; of hard living; of long and bitter struggles arising out of the conflict of the jurisdictional claims of rival royal provinces; of heroic episodes in the long revolutionary war for national independence.

In that dominant inherited consciousness of Vermont's unique significance in the evolution of the nation there was a sure and adequate foundation for a type of loyalty that can justly be described as of unique quality. A more than ordinary resistance to change, a characteristic tenacity in holding on to whatever experience has shown to be useful and good, resulted sometimes in making the progress of desirable reforms slower in Vermont than in neighboring States. This was true in the sphere of industrial and agricultural technology no less than in the sphere of economic and social progress. In crises on the field of valor it was habitual for Vermonters to lead the way. When at Gettysburg the order was given, "Place the Vermonters in front and advance," that order was in consonance with the traditions of Vermont dating from Colonial and Revolutionary times.



But in economic and social matters Vermonters were generally in the rear guard, rarely or never in the vanguard.

That called for a small minus sign — and minus signs are irritants and obnoxious. But a good big plus sign was required to express the other consequences of the characteristic Vermont resistance to change, and tenacity in holding on to what experience had verified. The immovability of Vermont character and Vermont thought was, and is, the nation's most impregnable rock of resistance to the increasing assaults of alien ideologies and movements that aim to destroy both the institutions of free self-government and the faith and ideals upon which these rest. In a special and profound sense, Vermont is the anchorage of our national heritage of faith.

During the last thirty years or so the character of our Bennington population, and that of Southern Vermont in general, has changed. The comparative homogeneity has been replaced by a heterogeneity that is romantic and challenging. More and more, leadership in education, sports, culture, economic and social life, passes from the old type of Vermonter with his heritage of a passionate love of freedom to a new type of Vermonter whose heritage is rich in many things, but poor in the traditions of free government; lacking understanding of the ordered freedom of men whose forefathers learned and bequeathed to their

descendants the secret that freedom is the result of freemen's self-imposed compulsions to be free.

The ideals and institutions of freedom, always and everywhere, will be best cherished and defended against destruction by attrition or by revolution by those citizens who best know the history of those ideals and institutions. These can never be securely safe in the hands of citizens to whom their history is unknown, or no more than a tale that is told instead of a vital part of the inspiration of life. Our regional historical societies are the first line of our intellectual and moral defenses of our free institutions. Those who best know how and why these exist, will best defend, protect and preserve our great heritage.

The historian is not a mere recorder: he is, or ought to be, a prophet, an inspirer of youth, holding up to youth's vision, as a moral and intellectual challenge, the record of a combination of vision, resolution, daring and sacrifice in a price paid for the realization in law and institution and custom of man's inherent dignity, as a living soul, partaker of the essential nature of God. Men who barter freedom for security, whether collectively as citizens or individually as persons, degrade and enslave themselves. They make a choice that imposes upon all that make it the stigma of shame and degradation, the choice of fellowship with ox and ass instead of kinship with God.

In the development in Bennington of a museum of regional history the supreme objective and guiding

purpose has been to inspire, direct, and equip wise, courageous and consecrated defenders of the great heritage here briefly outlined. If we can make the full implications of our State motto, "Freedom and Unity," understood and appreciated by our future citizens, generation after generation, the stability of our institutions and the expansion of our liberties and rights, with resulting enrichment of our lives, will be assured. Free men who know why and how they are free will never wear fetters upon their limbs without resisting, or upon their minds, in any society.

The Vermont boy or girl who learns what sons and daughters of the Green Mountain State have contributed to the greatness of America, and to the betterment and progress of mankind, is certain to regard the state with greater pride than before. No matter what his or her racial or ancestral background, that knowledge and understanding of Vermont's contribution to the majesty and dominion of secure self-government can not fail to result in a patriotism of finer texture and greater strength than could otherwise develop.

The moral armament of the nation against the perils of impairment or destruction of our institutions of ordered freedom and constitutional self-government, is a responsibility the leaders of our historical societies must accept if they are to justify their existence. In recent years we have been made acutely conscious of the existence of subversive propagandas

and activities that endanger our liberties and our happiness as individuals, and the existence of the republic itself. From the birth of the republic until now, there has never been a time when there was a complete absence of subversive agencies and activities. Since the Bolshevik counter-revolution in Russia succeeded in destroying the newly born democratic government in that country, the first in its long history, and setting up its stead the infamous Soviet dictatorship, every free nation in the world has been subject to dangerous assaults without precedent in all the history of civilization. It is that fact the leaders of our historical societies must face and recognize as their supreme challenge.

Either we of the organized historical groups and societies must take a place of prominence in the defense of our heritage of free institutions, or we must accept the ignoble role of futile peddlers of antiquarian lore. We share with the churches and synagogues and other religious organizations the responsibility of the front line defense of everything that civilization holds of enduring wealth. And the only defense that will achieve the desired end is offensive attack, relentless and unceasing.

Subversive activities are not confined to the termites that are hatched in the ugly ideology of Communism, individuals of perverted mentality and morals, who resort to every evil device of crime and violence to weaken, and to destroy if possible, the faith,

the morals, and the ordinances by which we live as free human beings. Not less dangerous than these are the muddled-brained, confused, spiritually unanchored, individuals who act under the impulse of delusions and illusions, the legion of those who under the hypnosis of negation and chaos have come to believe that evil means can bring good and wholesome ends; that perfectly good omelettes can be made from perfectly rotten eggs; that freedom can emerge from the spawn of tyranny. Equally dangerous, also, are the weaklings who place security above freedom, doles above the dignity of the soul; the cretins who accept fetters and shackles because they fear being bruised and hurt in the struggle to keep what the Founding Fathers bequeathed to them and to all of us.

Those who march openly under the banners of Communism, Fascism, or any of their totalitarian variants, are less to be feared than the legions of misguided muddle-heads, weaklings, compromisers, and inferiority-complexed exhibitionists who wrap themselves in the habiliments of religion, humanitarianism and pseudo-liberalism. To strip these and expose them, naked, in the light of history so that all mankind may see and recognize them for what they are, is a task which the historian is equipped to do, and, therefore, morally bound to undertake.

No amount of military might, or of police power, can defeat the host of sappers and miners who ceaselessly, like termites, attack the foundations of our

social order. Rifles and bullets, clubs and prisons and gallows, admittedly are indispensable. There are elements which can best be, or even only be, combatted by these instrumentalities of force, much as we may regret that fact. But the main evils lie beyond the reach of the instruments of brute force. They are ideological in origin and in character. No weapon of destruction, not even the atomic bomb, can kill a wrong idea. No prison cell can confine, no gallows hang, a mistaken interpretation of social experience.

The religious teacher who succeeds in making one confused being accept the laws of God as his ideological chart and guide, does more to protect society against subversive attack than can be accomplished by all the cells and jail warders of Sing Sing or Alcatraz. Ten thousand dollars wisely spent by a regional historical society that is alertly conscious of its opportunities and responsibilities, will produce more effective defense against Communism, or any other subversive ideology, or propaganda based on such ideology, than a hundred times as much money spent on repressive police measures. The most effective defense of our American way of life that can be had is love of our land and our institutions that is based upon a sound understanding of them, and of how they came to be what they are.

This, briefly and bluntly stated, is the *credo* of this historian. It is the basis upon which the regional historical society and museum over which he presides

have been built and the faith by which they are directed. This little book is an expression of that faith. Among those residents of Bennington for whom the historic sites and memorials of the town possess special interest, many, if not most, have known that one of the town's early taverns was the birthplace of Daniel Williams Harmon, who became a pioneer explorer of the Canadian Northwest. So much was known to a large number of people a generation ago, and to a smaller number in later years. Yet he was a vague and shadowy figure in our historical background. Too little was known of the man or of his achievements to arouse local pride, or even interest.

From the Journal in which he recorded his wanderings it was easy to draw the necessary biographical data to sketch his career from his boyhood until the time of his retirement from the North West Company in 1819. Little was known of his ancestry or parentage, and nothing at all of the latter part of his life, almost a quarter of a century, the period between the publication of his book in 1820 and his death. He seemed to have dropped into oblivion. It required long and extensive investigation to discover how he was occupied during the years following his retirement. Even the time and place of his death were unknown and were discovered only as a result of long, but intermittent, research and investigation extending over a period of twenty years. Most of the ref-

erences to him in books and magazine articles originating in Vermont said that he died in Burlington, Vermont, in 1845, some saying in March of that year, others April. Biographical notices of him in reference works published outside of Vermont generally state that he died in or near Montreal in 1845. As will appear in the unfolding of the story, these accounts are all wrong.

His grave is both unmarked and unknown. Careful and exhaustive search of every sort of record in Vermont having resulted negatively, no record of or reference to his death, burial, or estate having been turned up, the conclusion was reached that he did not die in Vermont and was not buried in Vermont. The search was transferred to Montreal. A careful search of the vital records of that city failed to discover any record of Harmon's death. All the existing cemetery records of the city were examined with the result that no record of or reference to his death or burial was found. The files of Montreal papers were searched with no different result. The records of the probate court for the Montreal District disclosed that no will by Daniel Williams Harmon had been probated there and there was no record of any estate left by him. The files of the Hudson Bay Company, which had absorbed the old North West Company, were searched without useful result.

Further research in Montreal appeared to be useless, a waste of time, energy and money. So the field



of inquiry and investigation was widened. The records of several other towns and cities in Quebec and Ontario were searched, particularly Ottawa, where, it was known, one of Harmon's daughters conducted a school for girls for many years. Appeals were made through the principal Canadian newspapers, as well as by radio, for the desired information, or for any information that might be helpful. The appeals brought numerous responses from people who remembered Miss Harmon, the schoolmistress, and from others who sent information about Harmon, mostly copied from old scrapbooks, none of it new, and, unfortunately, none of it helpful. As told in the pages that follow, what information we have concerning his death was discovered in Montreal, after all.

Some people may think that the objective was not important enough to justify so much labor and expense. One who was not unduly cynical might well hold that view. But, of course, it begs the entire larger question of the worth-whileness of all historical research. Does it really matter to anybody whether Columbus was born in Genoa, for example? Or whether Thomas Davenport, the Vermont blacksmith, or some other person, was the inventor of the electric motor? The answer is both conclusive and easy, but need not be given here. What is significant is the fact that there is abundant evidence that many of our young people have come to a profounder interest in Bennington, their home town, as a result of learning the main

facts about Daniel Williams Harmon. The portrait of him that hangs in the museum in Bennington, carrying the information that he was a Bennington-born explorer of the Canadian Northwest, inspires numerous questions. People want to know his story. That is ample justification.

The fact that Simon Fraser, who was Harmon's contemporary and associate in the fur-trading and exploration of the North West region of Canada, under the North West Company, was born in Bennington, not far from Harmon's birthplace, was unknown in Bennington until it was made known by the museum here, in connection with the acquisition and display of his portrait. No mention of the fact had occurred in any of the numerous books, pamphlets, and newspaper and magazine articles known to have been published. In more than forty years residence in Bennington, during which time his principal occupation has made him more familiar with local historical data than any other person in Bennington, and perhaps more familiar than any other person that has lived in the town, this writer never found any mention of Simon Fraser, the Canadian explorer, in connection with the town of Bennington or the State of Vermont. Neither did he ever hear any mention of anything of the sort.

The story of the background, parentage and early life of Simon Fraser is here told for the first time. And this is also the first account of the connection of one

of the great names in Canadian history with Bennington. It has been gratifying to observe the interest this discovery has aroused in our region, particularly among those we call the "Old Families," whose roots lie deep in our history, as well as among boys and girls of school age, without regard to ancestry. As a result of the story of Simon Fraser, Bennington has become more interesting to many of our young people. Many of them have been led, for the first time, to read the story of westward expansion, the movement of civilization onward from the Atlantic to the Pacific, both in Canada and the United States.

Like Harmon, Fraser lived obscurely, in humble circumstances, after his retirement from the North West Company, to the end of his life. Nearly thirty years after his death the Canadian Parliament voted small annuities to a son and a daughter, the last survivors of his family. And sixty years after his death a memorial stone was erected over his grave by the Hudson Bay Company. There is also a fine memorial to Fraser at New Westminster, British Columbia, erected in 1908. There are no such memorials to Harmon. The Hudson Bay Company would have marked Harmon's grave as it marked Fraser's, but by that time there was no one who could tell where he was buried.

These two men whose lives were so strikingly similar, forming one of the most remarkable parallels of the sort in our history, together make an interesting

link between Bennington and Canada. The fathers of the two men fought in Bennington Battle, one on the side of the Crown, the other against it. The son of Simon Fraser lived and died a steadfast Loyalist and the son of Daniel Harmon lived and died an American, unswerving in his loyalty to the United States. Yet the life-work of both had the same historic purpose: they extended the dominion of Britain over a vast area. Without their labors, it is reasonable to believe, the whole of what is now British Columbia might have become part of the United States of America, instead of the rich and proud member it is of the great confederation of free peoples, Canada, whose other title, proudly borne, is British North America.

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**Daniel Williams Harmon**

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## I.

### DANIEL WILLIAMS HARMON

## I.

One of the early hostelries of historic Bennington was the tavern kept by Captain Daniel Harmon and his wife, whose maiden name was Lucretia Dewey, daughter of Martin Dewey, born at Westfield, Massachusetts, and a niece of Parson Jedediah Dewey. Daniel Harmon was a sergeant in the Militia Company commanded by his wife's cousin, Captain Elijah Dewey, and was in the Battle of Bennington. At a later date he became a captain of the militia and was thereafter known as Captain Harmon.

He married Lucretia Dewey in July, 1770. It is not certainly known whether the tavern was built and ready for occupancy at the time of the marriage or was begun later. Having due regard to the time and to the customs of the time, it would seem likely that a man who was about to marry and to build a fine and substantial house, such as this was, would have had the house ready for his bride at the time of their marriage. That would fix the date of its building as 1770, which probably is correct. However, Harmon's nephew, Reverend Fisk Harmon, said that he believed the house was built in 1773, while local antiquarians have placed the date at 1771.

On the morning of August fourteenth, 1777, General John Stark ate breakfast in the Harmon Tavern, according to a local tradition which has

never seriously been questioned, and is strongly buttressed by the logic of inherent probability. Stark's New Hampshire troops, on their arrival in Bennington, camped at first on ground adjacent to the tavern kept by Colonel Samuel Herrick. The site of this tavern, on the main highway connecting Bennington and Troy is appropriately marked. After a day or two the New Hampshire troops and part of the Vermont militia were moved to a new camping ground in the northwest part of the town, now marked by a granite memorial. Then the various units of Massachusetts militia regiments and volunteers and Captain Elijah Dewey's Bennington company, encamped on Colonel Herrick's land, the colonel in command.

General Stark expected to attack the British on the fifteenth, but this was made impossible by the heavy rain. On the morning of the fourteenth General Stark rode from the main camp to the smaller one for a conference with Herrick and Colonel Symonds and other leaders from Massachusetts. Presumably the object was to perfect final plans for the contemplated attack next day. On his way he stopped at Harmon's for refreshment. Tradition has it that he ate his breakfast there.

Probably the breakfast was prepared for him by Mistress Lucretia Harmon herself, a comely woman of twenty-seven, mother of three young children, Argalus, in his seventh year, and Martin in his fourth, Calvin in his third. She was again pregnant, three months



of her time gone. Her fourth son was born on the nineteenth of February, 1778 and was named Daniel Williams. Four other children were born as follows: Lucretia, the only daughter in March, 1780, Stephen, in March, 1782, Rueben, born in May, 1784, and Joseph, in February, 1786. It is believed that all eight of the children were born in the tavern, though some old residents of the town sixty or seventy years ago claimed that the first child, Argalus, was born before the family moved into the house in which they kept a tavern. Seven of the children certainly were born there and the first born was probably born there.

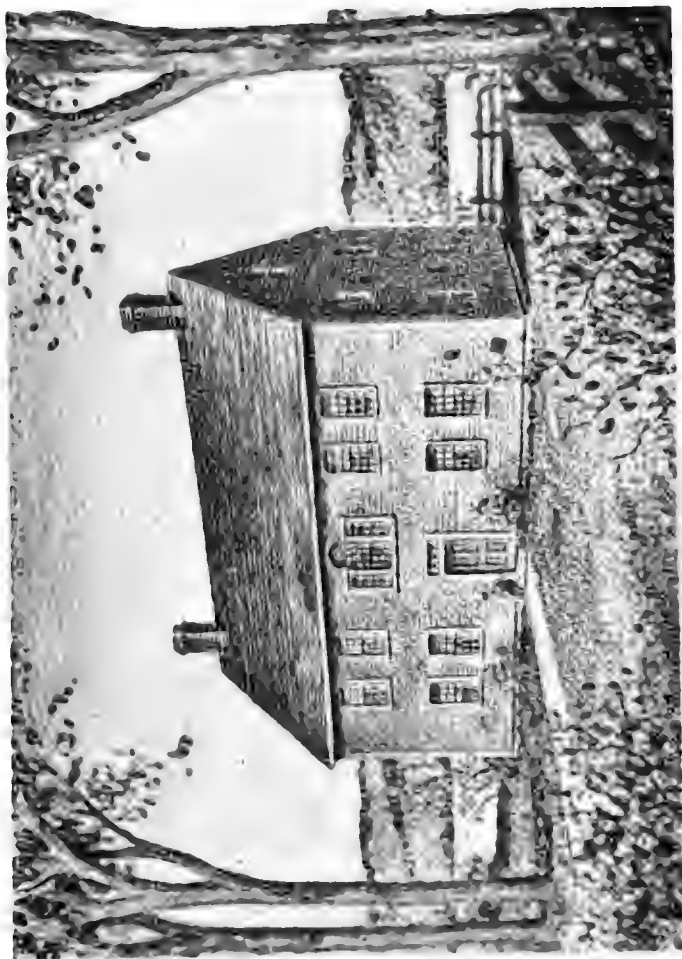
Landlord Captain Harmon and his wife were deeply religious people, as were most of the Harmons and the Deweys, numerous in the town. Captain Daniel and Lucretia, his wife, joined the Church in August 1774, while Parson Jedediah Dewey was the pastor. They were a simple folk, the sturdy men and women of the First Church. They were Separatists and adhered to what is known as the Cambridge Platform, an exposition of an austere and somber faith and puritanical and grim discipline founded upon a narrow Calvinistic theology. It was the union of an anthropological conception of God in relation to man with a narrow individualistic morality.

Whatever defects our modern judgments ascribe to the religious beliefs and practices of this pioneer people, we must not lose sight of the fact that they

constituted the only conscious and organized spiritual aspiration and expression of the age. The Church of Christ alone bore high and onward the torch of enlightenment. It alone asserted, as a corollary of God's existence and creation of the universe, the dignity of man and the right to civil liberty. And it alone maintained the light of learning in what else must have been an age of darkness and degeneration.

To most modern minds the word tavernkeeper suggests a picture that in nothing resembles the typical tavernkeeper of eighteenth century New England. Landlord Harmon and his wife were simple, God-fearing, sober, industrious and pious folk. They were members of the Church, regular attendants at Sabbath day services in the Meeting House and mid-week prayer meetings, and they observed the custom of family prayer in the home which has almost disappeared and, according to their best light and understanding, they observed the injunction to rear their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Their children attended the village school, south of the Meeting House and Clio Hall, the first incorporated academy in the State, which stood where the present First Congregational Church stands.

As long as they remained in Bennington, Captain Daniel Harmon and his wife were highly respected. With their children they removed to Vergennes some time in the summer of 1796. There Captain Harmon died in June, 1805, at the age of a little over fifty-



CAPTAIN HARMON'S TAVERN, BENNINGTON  
BIRTHPLACE OF DANIEL WILLIAMS HARMON



seven. His widow lived on there with one or the other of her sons until 1822. At that time she moved to Coventry, apparently with her son Calvin with whom she was making her home when he moved from Vergennes to settle in Coventry. She died in Coventry in 1829.

The writer of this sketch remembers quite well the old tavern that was known as the Harmon Inn. In a bad state of decay, though still capable of being saved and restored, it was plainly evident that it was in the exact form, both exterior and interior, in which it had been built. It was a well designed house. Notable were the graceful winding staircase with a cherrywood handrail, the panelled doors with their simple but finely decorative hand forged hinges and latches, and the good mouldings, such as nearly every New England carpenter used to be able to make, but which not one carpenter in a thousand today would dare attempt. It was a goodly and pleasant house; even in its ruins there was a certain dignity. It had never been used as a tavern after the Harmons left in 1796. Thereafter it was used only as a farmhouse.

The location of the old tavern, on a little used road, away from the main highway, caused people of a later generation, the latter part of the nineteenth century, to indulge in much speculation. How could a tavern so situated draw enough patronage to exist? Many people thought that it could not; that there must been something mysterious about it, per-

haps something sinister. By such people the old tavern was called the "Mystery House."

There was no mystery about it, of course. When the tavern was built, and for many years thereafter, virtually all the traffic to and from the North passed in front of it. And the same was true of the traffic between Albany and Lansingburgh and Bennington. Traffic from Lansingburgh and Albany to Brattleboro and Massachusetts went by the way of the West road, past Dewey's Tavern and the Meeting House. But all traffic to Bennington from New York, as well as all traffic to the north to places like Rutland, Burlington and Montreal, turned off the West road at Colonel Herrick's where the Pleasant Valley School now stands, and proceeded over the road leading to the business center of Bennington going past Harmon's Tavern. The business center was on and near the present Battle Monument Park. The road is in use today. The tavern of Captain Harmon was well situated and was well patronized. Travellers to and from Montreal often stopped there, a fact which may well have exerted a profound influence upon the boy, Daniel Williams Harmon, who was to become a resident of Montreal and one of the makers of modern Canada. Few men contributed more to the expansion of British North America, than the Bennington born Vermonter.

## II

Some time after reaching his majority, before his twenty-second birthday, young Daniel Williams Harmon left Vergennes, where since 1796 he had resided with his parents, and went to Montreal, where he entered the employ of the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company, merchants, as a warehouse clerk. It is possible, and not at all improbable, that he obtained this employment as a result of friendships formed in his father's tavern at Bennington. The firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company was extensively engaged in the fur trade and its representatives and customers, as well as those of other Montreal firms, were frequently in Bennington as they travelled to and fro between New York, Albany and Montreal. That is why, in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth, many young men from Bennington sought and found employment in Montreal.

The firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company was an affiliate of, and had taken a leading part in establishing, the North West Company, patterned after, and a rival of, the Hudson Bay Company. The latter had acquired an almost complete monopoly of the hundred years old fur trade. This trade, which by the end of a century had come to be the most important factor in the economic life and development of British North America, began with the establishment of the first Fort Charles, toward the end of 1669. In

1670, under Charles II, a royal charter was granted to certain "Gentlemen Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay." This followed the British-French expedition inspired and directed by the French explorer Radisson but manned, outfitted and financed mainly by British interests. It was this expedition that built Fort Charles, later to be known as Fort Rupert, the most important of the trading posts of the fur trade.

The expedition had as its major purpose the discovery of a passage to the Orient, the North West Passage, of epochal historical importance. A secondary purpose of the expedition was the opening of extensive trade in furs with the Indians of the little known Hudson Bay region. It was for these purposes that the "Gentlemen Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay" were chartered. The charter gave them a monopoly of trading rights in all the vast and unexplored region drained by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay and rivers not flowing into Hudson Bay. Not only that, in addition to the trading monopoly, the charter gave the company almost complete and unlimited sovereignty rights over the whole vast area. The fur trade was highly profitable and flourished. Following the line of least resistance, the company, which was commonly called "The Great Company," took full advantage of the easily accessible, and abundant, Indian fur trade, but made almost no attempt to search out the Northwest Passage. Equally, it made



little effort to explore the interior of the country. It exploited to the utmost of its power the trade opportunities of the easily travelled outer fringe.

Absolute as were its powers and rights under its charter, the Great Company never achieved an actual monopoly of the fur trade of the region. There were many independent English traders who engaged in trade in furs with the Indians, in defiance of the big company's protests and threats, and found the business profitable. Then there were the French, who claimed Hudson's Bay and by reason of that claim, contested the right of the British to exercise any such authority in the region as they asserted. The French sent armed expeditions against posts of the British company at the mouths of such rivers as the Moose, the Albany, the Nelson and the Severn. This conflict was, in truth, part of the long and bitter struggle of British and French for mastery of which the British-French Wars were the political expression. The treaty of Utrecht in 1713 ended the war between France and England in Europe, but it did not end French opposition to the British in the Hudson Bay area.

Steadily, by a slow but relentless process, the British established their supremacy and the French were driven out. In details, the French generally proved superior to the British in the seizure of trading posts and their defence, but the British demonstrated their great superiority in the over-all contest. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, 1770-1780, almost

the whole of the fur trade had passed under control of the Hudson Bay Company, which pursued a ruthless policy at a great profit. It still continued to ignore both the development of the interior country and search for the Northwest Passage.

French and French-Canadian traders and trappers resented the domination of the trade by the British and maintained a constant outcry of protest against the methods of the Hudson Bay Company, which they declared to be oppressive. After the Treaty of Paris, 1763, by which France ceded Canada to England, a new element appeared. In Montreal, Scotch immigrants had become numerous and many of them entered the fur merchandising business. They became aggressive and highly successful competitors of the Hudson Bay Company, which fought back with the vigor of fury. It was out of this situation the North West Company developed. Men like Simon McTavish, Joseph Frobisher, Alexander Mackenzie, Alexander N. McCleod, and others, brought into existence the North West Company, which for more than a quarter of a century was to share the fur trade of British North America with the Hudson Bay Company. In the winter of 1783-84 a group of Montreal merchants formed an agreement to establish prices and to protect themselves against what they regarded as unjust practices of the Hudson Bay Company. They called themselves the North West Company, but it was in truth, at that time, no more than a trade

association for protective purposes.

In 1787 the North West Company was formed. It was a common-law company and its stockholders were the leading trading companies of Montreal. Most of the companies, like McTavish, Frobisher and Company, did not deal in furs exclusively, but in various kinds of import and export goods. They retained their identity as general merchant firms, but they did most of their fur trading through the North West Company.

### III.

In April 1800, Daniel Williams Harmon transferred from the position of warehouse clerk of the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company to that of clerk for the North West Company under a contract for seven years. Then and there the term "clerk" bore a meaning quite different from that commonly attached to it in our day. It meant that young Harmon was an authorized agent of the company, endowed with considerable powers and authority, trading on the company's behalf with trappers, mostly Indians and French Canadian-Indian half-breeds. He also represented the company in its relations with the various fixed trading stations, bringing to them supplies of many kinds, such as coarse, heavy woolen clothing, brandy, simple medicines and drugs and small tools, and receiving in return, to be conveyed back to Montreal, pelts and hides.

Goods for transport and exchange in either direction, were baled in large bales of something like one hundred and fifty pounds each. These were packed in birch-bark canoes for conveyance by water between portages. The average canoe was capable of carrying three tons or more, and was manned by eight or nine French speaking Canadians, called voyageurs. Ten canoes made a brigade and three brigades made a squadron. Each brigade had two pilots or guides.

These men directed the course by river or lake or overland and they superintended the carrying of both cargoes and canoes over the portages on the shoulders of men, or on small wooden platforms fitted with runners, on the principle of the "stoneboat" that used to be a feature of almost every New England farm. The guides had about the same authority over the voyageurs as the captain of a ship has over his crew.

The functions of a clerk like Harmon were essentially those of an agent or business manager for the company. He supervised the trading of the merchandise for furs and for food supplies for the voyageurs and guides. He made settlements with the keepers of the various fixed trading posts. He distributed brandy and rum among the voyageurs and kept drunkenness to the lowest possible minimum. He dispensed simple medicines and drugs to those under his control who became sick and gave first aid to the injured. The men who composed the crews of these fur trading expeditions were a rough, hard drinking and hard fighting lot. A drunken crew of voyageurs was more to be feared than as many war-mad Indians.

The quiet God-fearing young Vermonter scarcely appears as a credible historical person against such a background, yet the fact remains that he was one of the most successful clerks in the history of the two great rival companies, the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company. He penetrated farther into the hitherto unexplored interior than any except

one small group of his contemporaries, and he remained in the interior without returning to civilization longer than any of them. He became one of the partners in the North West Company. He must have been beset by many and serious misgivings at the outset of his career as clerk for the company. He was not a professed Christian; the mental and spiritual experience called "Conversion" had not yet come to him. He would have described himself as an unregenerate sinner. He was, however, religious by nature. He was a God-fearing man. The religious training he had received from his parents and from the Church in Bennington had left a deep impress upon his character. This is made quite evident by the Journal in which he recorded his voyages and travels.

He was distressed by the profanity of the voyagers and by their intemperance, but his distress did not compel him to refrain from dealing out liquor as required. He was shocked to discover that the voyagers did not make any observance of the Sabbath Day, but acted on Sunday just as they did any other days. For himself, the serious-minded young Vermonter sought seclusion and spent the day without labor, most of the time reading his Bible. He was much troubled, at first, by the lax standards of sexual morality prevailing.

These men of the fur trading companies, and the Canadian-French trappers, were rough, vigorous, primitive and lusty men, with strong passions. They

were absent from civilization for months and years at a time. Deprived of sexual intercourse altogether, life would have been intolerable for them. Women they must have — and the only female humans available were the Indian women and girls encountered in their journeyings. In the early period of the organized fur trade, it became a common practice for white men of all grades employed by the companies to take unto themselves Indian women and girls as "Squaws."

These were monogamous unions. Usually the white man, having selected a girl or woman as his choice, bargained for her with her father or brothers. There was a sort of regional price standard. Upon the face of it, the bargain was one-sided. It provided that the woman must live with the man, in full subjection to him, but that he was free to leave her at any time and send her back to her family. The woman had no such right to leave her man. There was to be no return of the purchase price, or of any part of it. The bargain was usually sealed and ratified by a celebration at which there was dancing by the Indians — and often, drunken orgies.

Generally the Indian women and girls were eager, and not merely willing, to become the Squaws of white men. They regarded it as high honor, to be happily welcomed. They cohabited with their white masters, bore their children, did their full share of the work, including the carrying of cargoes and canoes over portages. When the time came for the men to

return to civilization, or sooner, if they had grown tired of them, the women were turned adrift, to shift for themselves. All too often this meant sentence to a tragic, lingering death. This custom was not unique, peculiar to the Canadian Northwest, but universal. Wherever explorers and pioneers of one race have advanced into territories inhabited by people of another race and color, miscegenation has resulted. It was so in Asia, in Africa and in Australia.

The offspring of these unions presented a problem to the fur trade companies. There were many exceptions to be sure, but in the great majority of cases the half-breeds were a pathetic and pitiable class. Among the exceptions were the children born of unions of white men of superior rank to, and more education than, ordinary voyageurs and trappers, such men as trading post superintendents, for example, a very large percentage of them Scotch. Many, and perhaps most, of the children born of these Scotch-Indian unions, were well cared for, given as much education as could be provided, and became good sound citizens, builders of civilization.

For the majority of half-breeds life was little short of a calamity. They were neither liked nor wanted by whites or Indians. As a general rule, they had unreasoning pride in their white parentage and ancestry, even as their mothers regarded themselves as superior to other Indian women as a result of their alliance with white men. The half-breeds were offensive to



the pure-blood Indians; because of their attitude of superiority they were no less offensive to the whites, who regarded them as Indians and expected them to behave as Indians. Before Harmon joined the North West Company, orders had been issued strictly forbidding the union of any of its employees with Indian women, and requiring that all men who desired to take "Squaws" must select them from half-breed women.

The primary object of this order was economic: the half-breed following of the expeditions had become too numerous. The new policy was also designed to reduce the hazards of conflict with the Indians, fights being far from an infrequent accompaniment of the celebrations connected with squaw-taking by white men. From his Journal it is evident that Harmon was deeply interested in the freedom and informality of these interracial unions. It is also evident that his initial disapproval was tempered by time and observation, as well as by his own sex urges. The subject is repeatedly referred to in the Journal and his observations of the custom and its results are numerous and interesting.

When he had been eighteen months away from home and civilization he appears to have experienced his first serious temptation to make a "Squaw" union. At Swan River fort, in early October, 1802, a Cree chief called on Harmon and urged him to take one of

his daughters, a comely young Indian girl. "I am fond of you and it is my wish to have my daughter with the white people" said the Cree chief according to the Journal. Harmon writes, "he almost persuaded me to keep her, for I was sure that while I had the daughter I should not only have the father's furs but those of all his band. This would be for the interest of the Company, and would therefore turn to my own advantage in some measure; so that a regard to interest well nigh made me consent to an act, which would have been unwise and improper. But, happily for me, I escaped the snare."

In passing it may be both prudent and helpful to observe that a sort of Pecksniffian unctuousness of language in Harmon's moralizings, which is likely to repel most readers, probably was added by the editor of the Journal, Reverend Daniel Haskel, President of the University of Vermont, who prepared the manuscript for the press. By his own admission, the reverend gentleman received the manuscript from the author "fully written out" and had "written it wholly over." The style of the work in its published form, he explains, "is not properly my own, nor that of Mr. Harmon, but something between both."

#### IV

Three years after the episode of the "temptation" just described, in October 1805, Harmon took unto himself a half-breed Squaw. She was Elizabeth, or Lizzette, a girl of fourteen, comely and intelligent, daughter of a woman of the Snare Indian tribe, which was a tribe of Crees inhabiting the region west of the Rocky Mountains. Her father was a French-Canadian. Harmon describes the circumstances as follows:

"This day a Canadian's daughter, a girl of about fourteen years of age was offered to me; and after mature consideration concerning the step which I ought to take, I have finally concluded to accept her, as it is customary for all gentlemen who remain, for any length of time in this part of the world to have a female companion, with whom they can pass their time more socially and agreeably than to live a lonely life, as they must do if single. If we can live in harmony together, my intention now is to keep her as long as I remain in this uncivilized part of the world; and when I return to my native land I shall endeavor to place her under the protection of some honest man, with whom she can pass the remainder of her days in this country, much more agreeably than it would be possible for her to do were she to be taken down into the civilized world, to the manners, customs and language of which she would be an entire stranger. Her mother is of the tribe of the Snare Indians, whose country lies along the Rocky Mountains. The girl is

said to have a mild disposition and an even temper, which are qualities very necessary to make an agreeable woman and an affectionate partner."

The union was not broken up in the manner contemplated by Harmon and set forth in his Journal, when the time came for him to return to civilized life, in 1819. The two had lived together fourteen years when he turned his face homeward. She had borne him ten children, some of whom had died. She had been faithful and obedient to him; he had been faithful and kind to her. In all his references to her there is no hint that Harmon ever felt any affection for her. Nothing even remotely suggesting romantic love can be found in any mention of her. Always he refers to her as "the woman," or as "she." The nearest to any expression of affection and tenderness occurs in the Journal under date of February 28, 1819, at Stuart's Lake:

"—my intention is, during the next summer, to visit my native land. I design, also to take my family with me and leave them there that they may be educated in a civilized and Christian manner. The mother of my children will accompany me; and, if she shall be satisfied to remain in that part of the world, I design to make her regularly my wife by a formal marriage. It will seem by this remark that intentions have materially changed, since the time that I first took her to live with me; and as my conduct in this respect is different from that which had



DANIEL WILLIAMS HARMON



generally been pursued by the gentlemen of the North West Company, it will be proper to state some of the reasons which have governed my decision in regard to this weighty affair. It has been made with the most serious deliberation and, I hope, under solemn sense of my accountability to God.

“Having lived with this woman as my wife, though we were never formally contracted to each other, during life and having children by her, I consider that I am under a moral obligation not to dissolve the connection if she is willing to continue it. The union which has been formed between us, in the providence of God, has not only been cemented by a long and mutual performance of kind offices, but also by a more sacred consideration. Ever since our mind was turned affectually to the subject of religion, I have taken pains to instruct her in the great doctrines of Christianity. My exertions have not been in vain. Through the merciful agency of the Holy Spirit, I trust that she has become a partaker with me in the consolations and hopes of the gospel. I consider it to be my duty to take her to a Christian land, where she may enjoy Divine ordinances, grow in grace and ripen for glory . . . . .

“We have children still living who are equally dear to us both. How could I spend my days in the civilized world and leave my beloved children in the wilderness? The thought has in it the bitterness

of death. How could I tear them from a mother's love, and leave her to mourn over their absence to the day of her death? Possessing only the common feelings of humanity, how could I think of her in such circumstances, without anguish? On the whole, I consider the course which I design to pursue as the only one which religion and humanity would justify."

To understand the decision concerning his mate it is necessary to take note of his spiritual development. In the early autumn of 1813 Harmon passed through a spiritual crisis. Up to that time he had not been a professed Christian. He was a God-fearing man in the strict sense of that term. He never doubted that God exists or that all morality and righteousness rest upon His law. The influence of the Church of Christ at Bennington, and of the instruction received from pious parents, was very great. His brother, Stephen, also exercised a profound influence over him. Letters from Stephen which were forwarded from Montreal when opportunity arose, often taking many months to reach him, urged him to become converted. So far as can be learned from his Journal, with only his early training and his Bible to guide him, in solitude he struggled through the confusion of doubts and fears, and without the help and guidance that a wise and experienced priest would have given, he found his way to spiritual peace, to a sure faith and the comforting assurance of oneness with God.



Under the date of September 1, 1813, he wrote: "I also prayed a gracious God to enable me to believe in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As I was praying today, on a sudden, the faith concerning which I was so solicitous was, I trust graciously granted to me. My views of the Saviour underwent a total change. I was enabled not only to believe in his existence, but to apprehend his superlative Excellency; and now he appears to be, in truth what the scriptures described him to be. The chiefest among ten thousand, and one altogether lovely\*\*\*\*\*

"As I seem to myself to have hitherto led a more wicked life than the rest of my fellow creatures, I deem it proper for the time to come, to devote the first day of every month to religious fasting, employing it in reading the scriptures, in devout meditation, and in prayer, that I may keep in mind the great business of life, which I now consider to be a preparation for eternity."

Six days later he wrote: "I have this day composed two prayers, which I design to use regularly and devoutly, morning and evening. It is not only a duty, but a privilege, thus to approach the mercy seat of the Great Sovereign of the Universe in the name of a prevalent Intercessor, and to supplicate the numerous blessings which we heed, as well as to give thanks for those which we are constantly receiving."

As soon as he had found peace for himself he felt the urge to share it with others. He set about making a convert of his mate, the half-breed Lizzette, and did not rest until he was assured that she both understood and believed. Henceforth there is a gentler and kindlier tone in his references to her. Occasionally she is still just "the woman," more often, however, he refers to her as "the mother of my children." Never does he use her name, Elizabeth, or refer to her as his wife.

## V.

Out of the nearly twenty years that elapsed between Harmon's departure from Montreal as a clerk of the North West Company and his return there as a partner in the company, eight and a half years had been spent west of the Rocky Mountains. He had explored the country almost all the way to the Pacific Ocean, separated from Montreal by more than three thousand miles. He had prospered so that he was now reasonably well-to-do. He had spent a longer time in the almost unknown regions than any other explorer, and had gone farther than any but a small group, almost to the Pacific Ocean. His observations made it possible to revise the maps of the country for the benefit of new generations. The courses of several navigable rivers were correctly delineated for the first time.

It is not the function of such a narrative sketch as this to pass judgment upon the importance and value of the explorations made by Harmon, recorded in his *Voyages and Travels*. Still less is it part of the purpose of such an account to institute any comparison of the relative value and importance of the explorations of Alexander Mackenzie and those of Daniel Williams Harmon. The books of both are classics, but Mackenzie's is the more extensive and is much better known. The fact remains that Harmon's experience was larger than Mackenzie's, his knowledge correspondingly greater. If attempt is

made to judge and determine the relative value of the contributions each man made to the opening up and settlement of the Canadian Northwest, it will be necessary to credit Mackenzie with primacy in that he was the first to reach the Pacific. At the same time, as might be expected as a result of his longer stay to the west of the Rockies, the account of that region given by Harmon is undeniably superior. They were in no sense rivals. That Daniel Williams Harmon holds high place among the builders of modern Canada none who is competent to express an opinion will question.

In addition to many significant additions to geographical knowledge of the regions covered by his travels, Harmon made important contributions to existing information in other departments of knowledge. Supplementary to his Journal he wrote two important essays which hold high rank in the literature of the subject. His *Account of the Indians Living West of the Rocky Mountains* is a vivid and informative work, recognized as an important—some say the most important — source of information on the subject. His contribution to the knowledge of the Indian tribal languages is of inestimable value.

Mackenzie, in his *Voyages*, published in 1801, devoted much attention to the Indian language. He furnished a considerable vocabulary of Indian words and their pronunciation. His studies related to the Cree or Knistenoux tongue, spoken by the Crees in

the Athabasca Lake region, east of the Rocky Mountains, where Mackenzie spent most of his time. Harmon likewise compiled and published an extensive vocabulary of the Cree or Knistenoux tongue. His work in this field differs from that of Mackenzie in some important respects. First, it is more extensive and comprehensive. Secondly, Harmon's studies were made west of the Rocky Mountains. It is recognized by all authorities that the purity of the Indian language was longest maintained west of the Rockies; that east of the Rockies greater mingling of Indians and whites inevitably led to a corruption of the language. The greater the number of half-breeds the greater, also, the extent of the change in the Indian language. Thus it came to pass that while basically it was the same language, the vernacular of the region east of the mountain division differed from that of the region west of it.

What Mackenzie studied and reported on was, essentially, a dialect. Finally, it is clear that in his spelling and pronunciation of Indian words Mackenzie does these things as a Frenchman would do them. Both spelling and pronunciation are in the French tradition. This is easily understood: Mackenzie got his knowledge of the Cree language from French-Indian half-breeds. But the woman with whom Harmon lived for fourteen years in the wilderness far removed from civilization, and then in civilization, in wedlock, for another twenty-five years, was a

native of the country west of the Rockies. She was his teacher.

To both Mackenzie and Harmon credit must be given for giving to the language of the Crees a definite orthography and written form. Harmon went more carefully into the local variations than Mackenzie, and the value of his contributions is greater. *The Principal Animals Which Are Found in the North Western Part of North America*, one of the essays supplementary to Harmon's Journal, is surprisingly inadequate and superficial. It reveals no evidence of careful and systematic research and study, such as a competent naturalist would give the subject. It is a list of the animals observed by an attentive observer with general rather than special interest or knowledge.

Mackenzie's famous two volume work, was published in London, in 1801, with the cumbrous title, *Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793*. It has been reprinted in many editions. Harmon's book, a single volume, of four hundred and thirty-two pages was printed in 1820 by an obscure firm of printers in Andover, Massachusetts. It had only one edition, but in 1905 it was reprinted by an American publisher as the fourth in the series "American Explorers," which the late Professor John Bach McMaster helped to edit. It was re-issued in a popular reprint of the series in 1922. The fact that it was published in London and extensively reviewed

gave to the work of Mackenzie great advantage over Harmon's work, which was issued and distributed privately, without notice by the literary reviews. That alone would have insured the earlier work greater popularity. Without detracting in any way or measure from the merits of Mackenzie's work, it is fair and just to say that Harmon's *Voyages and Travels* is equally important in the literature of the subject.

Like his famous associate, Simon Fraser, Daniel Williams Harmon did not reach the Pacific Ocean. He turned his back upon it and started eastward when he was considerably less than one hundred miles from the Pacific. There is nothing to indicate that this caused him disappointment or regret. There is no evidence that he had any desire to push on to the Pacific. He appears to have been eager to get back to civilization. The discovery of letters as yet unpublished may throw new light on the matter and compel a revision of this opinion. The known and available evidence compels belief that he turned eastward gladly; that he either never had, or had overcome, any desire to reach the shore of the Pacific Ocean.

His Journal reveals that for several years he had been subject to nostalgia. He wanted to get back to Vermont, to see those of his family who were left. The deaths of his father, two of his brothers and his young son affected him deeply. His father, Captain

Daniel Harmon, died in Vergennes, June twenty-fifth, 1805 and the news reached him on September 1806. The little son he had sent back to Vermont to be cared for and educated died on the eighteenth of March, 1813, and word reached him of the boy's death on the fourteenth of December of that year. On November twenty-third, 1816, word came to him that several months earlier two of his brothers, Martin and Stephen, had died. To Stephen he was particularly devoted.



## VI

He turned eastward and homeward with his wife and family and they arrived at Fort William on Lake Superior, in mid-August 1819. There, on the twenty-fourth of August, a son, John, was born. The legal marriage of Harmon and his wife took place a few days later, quite probably to the bewilderment of the woman. Toward the end of the year he reached Montreal, where he learned that the North West Company was to be reorganized and that in the new company he would not be a partner. He went to Vermont, pausing in Burlington long enough to arrange with the Reverend Daniel Haskel for the revision and editing of his Journal, before he went to Vergennes to visit his mother and brothers, taking his wife and children with him.

Harmon's marriage to Elizabeth Laval,\* daughter of a French voyageur and a Cree Indian mother, fulfilled the plan he had set down in his Journal before leaving the North West Territory. This marriage has been the subject of much cynical comment by some writers, and the accusation of hypocrisy has been made against Harmon. There is no justification for the accusation of cynicism. The formal marriage to the woman who had been his loyal mate for fourteen years, and the mother of his children, was in every way creditable to him.

*\*See the discussion of her name near the end of this sketch.*

In Vergennes he stayed with his brother, Calvin, and his mother for several months. In the autumn of 1820, the two brothers moved to the town of Coventry in Orleans County, some fifty miles north east of Montpelier. Although the town, chartered in 1784, had some settlers as early as 1800, the census of that year showing that there were seven persons in the town, all the family of John Morse, it was not until the arrival of the two Harmons that the village of Coventry began to take shape. To them belongs the honor of being called the founders of Coventry. They acquired a large acreage of land in the town, including the greater part of what is now the principal business center.

At a sale of land for taxes in 1813 Argalus Harmon of Vergennes and his brother Calvin bought a tract of land in Coventry that was as unpromising as any to be found in the state. The tract included the whole of Lot 107 on the town plan, embracing the greater part of the present village of Coventry. It also included all of Lot 41 and the major part of Lot 111. It was to develop this property that Calvin and Daniel Williams Harmon settled in Coventry in 1820. Up to that time there were about fifty families scattered over the town with no considerable group of houses anywhere. There was neither school, church, tavern, store, blacksmith shop, nor of mechanic's establishment of any kind. There was no regular grist mill, though there was one farmer who did contrive to do some

grinding occasionally in a crude and inefficient sort of way. People went to the neighboring towns, Barton, Brownington or Derby to trade.

It is possible that Daniel, who was two years Calvin's junior, furnished more than half the required capital, but this is not likely. Both men were wealthy, for that time. Immediately after their arrival in Coventry they began to clear a piece of land, about five acres, near where the Congregational Church now stands. Here was felled the first tree and here was built the first house in the village of Coventry, which, it is interesting to note, was for some years known as "Harmonsville." It was in that first house — a small log house — Daniel W. Harmon lived with his wife and children during the first year or so. There on May 16, 1821, a daughter, Almira Amelia, was born.

By the latter part of 1821 the two Harmon brothers had a small force of workmen employed in clearing land and building log houses of various sorts. In a large log house a man named Hamilton kept a boarding house, in which most of the Harmons' workmen lived. In a smaller building, also made of logs, Joseph Cutting set up the first blacksmith's shop in the town. At about the same time, the Harmon brothers established a general store and erected a saw mill.

Early in 1822 Daniel W. Harmon built a larger and more convenient house for his family. This was a

framed building. Near by his brother, Calvin, also built a two storey framed house for his family. The first school house in the village was built in the winter of 1822-1823, the two Harmon brothers being the principal contributors. They also gave the land for a village common, a gift for which residents of the village are grateful today. They made their gift subject to the condition that the inhabitants of the village should clear the land of tree stumps and level it off. It is said that the citizens made such slow progress in digging out the stumps that it was felt necessary to take measures to speed the work. It was voted that whoever was found guilty of being "the worse for liquor" should be penalised by being required to dig out one stump. Clearing the land made rapid progress thereafter, for offenses and penalties were numerous. The laying out of the common was soon completed. This is an interesting, though not unique, example of turning an anti-social habit to a good social purpose and benefit.

In the summer of 1829 the new meeting house was built, and in October of the same year the frame of a new house for Daniel Williams Harmon was raised. It was the third house built for the family in Coventry. The family moved into the new house early in 1830. The last three children of the Harmons were born there — Stephen, born July 28, 1831; Susan Elizabeth, born, March 29, 1833; Abby Maria, born July 27, 1838. Destruction of the town records of

A  
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TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

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SOIL, CLIMATE, CUSTOMS, LAWS, RELIGION, ETC. AND CONSIDERATIONS  
ON THE PROGRESS OF THE TWO NATIONS, NOW LITERALLY  
SPREADING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY OF THE PRINCIPAL  
NATIONS, TO BE FOUND IN THE FOREST AND  
FRONTIER OF THE LATTER DAY NATION.

ILLUSTRATED BY A MAP OF THE COUNTRY

BY DANIEL WILLIAMS HARMON,  
A PARTNER IN THE NORTH WEST COMPANY.

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1820

FACSIMILE OF HARMON'S JOURNAL



Coventry, by fire, many years ago, had the unfortunate result of making it impossible to determine when Daniel W. Harmon and his family moved away from Coventry. For a long time, on the basis of what evidence we had, it seemed probable that the family moved from Coventry in 1840, or 1841, to Sault-au-Recollet, near Montreal, Canada. It probably was during the winter of 1842-1843.

All known published accounts, including encyclopedias and all Canadian works of reference, agree in stating that Daniel W. Harmon died in 1845. They do not agree as to the place of his death and burial. Some accounts say that he died in Burlington, Vermont, others that he died in Montreal, others state rather vaguely that he died "near Montreal" while a few name Sault-au-Recollet as the place. The Harmon Genealogy, compiled by Artemas C. Harmon, states that Daniel Williams Harmon died at Sault-au-Recollet on the twenty-sixth day of March, 1845, at the age of 67 years, one month and seven days. We now know that this is incorrect: his death occurred in April, 1843.

Incredible as it seems, there is no official record of the death of Daniel Williams Harmon in existence. Neither is there any record of his interment or the place of it. Mr. Homer A. Mitchell, of Knowlton and Montreal, a regional historian familiar with all official records and other depositories of source material, made for me an extensive personal investigation

without finding any record, official or otherwise, of the death or burial of Harmon. The Chief Archivist of the Prothonotary's office, M. Jean-Jacques Lefebvre, had his staff search the records of the years between 1840 and 1850, without finding any record of the death. The officials of the Mount Royal Cemetery searched the records of old cemeteries in their possession, but found no mention of Daniel W. Harmon. When the Mount Royal Cemetery was opened, in 1852, bodies and remains were moved from the old cemeteries. Apparently careful records were made of all removals, and those records have been admirably kept and indexed. However, for a variety of reasons, a great many bodies were not removed from the old cemeteries. All that can be said with certainty, therefore, is that the body of Daniel W. Harmon was not among those moved from the old cemeteries to Mount Royal Cemetery in 1852.

The Mount Royal Cemetery records disclose that Lizzette Laval Harmon, widow of the late Daniel Williams Harmon, place of birth, Hudson Bay Territory, who died on the fourteenth of February, 1862, age seventy-two years, was buried in Section G. 11, a grave lot that was purchased by Calvin P. Ladd, Harmon's son-in-law. Her death is officially recorded, the place of death being given as Montreal. Curiously, in the official record of her death she is described as the widow of *David* Williams Harmon. There can be no doubt of this: it has been carefully



checked. The error probably arose in the transcription of the original certification of death. There is no question that this was the widow of Daniel Williams Harmon. From the Mount Royal Cemetery records we know that her youngest child, Abby Maria Harmon, with whom she made her home, and who was twenty-four when her mother died, shares her mother's grave. When she was sixty-six, in September, 1904, she committed suicide in Ottawa and was, by her own instructions, buried in the same grave as her mother.

## VII

Miss Harmon for many years conducted a school for girls in Ottawa which was highly esteemed and was attended by the daughters of well-to-do families, to use the old phrase. Some of her pupils are living and have furnished information concerning her. These old pupils all agree that Abby Maria Harmon was proud of her Cree blood and ancestry, and no less proud of her father's reputation as a fur trader and explorer. There must have been some reason why her mother's remains were not laid away by the side of those of her husband, who died nearly twenty years before her. Had the remains of the husband been transferred to the Mount Royal Cemetery from an old, abandoned cemetery, the fact would have been recorded. Had it been possible, when her mother died the daughter would, it is reasonable to suppose, have arranged for the burial of her mother by the side of her father. Her strong love for the memory of both her parents, and her pride in them, was a characteristic that impressed itself deeply on the minds of her pupils and friends.

One of her old pupils, whose mother was a close personal friend of Miss Harmon, in a reminiscent letter provided what may be, and in all likelihood is, the key to the mystery. It seems that when the family moved away from Coventry back to Canada it was not immediately possible to find a suitable dwelling place in

Montreal. They moved to a very small rented farm some nine miles out of Montreal, at Sault-au-Recollet; apparently a temporary makeshift until a more suitable place could be rented. The place was very dirty and very soon after the family moved into the house several of them were stricken with illness; which proved to be the dreaded disease, small-pox. Harmon himself and three of the children died of the disease within about six weeks. A previous tenant of the house had died of the disease. It is noteworthy that there are no public records of the death or the burial of either of the three children. They are enveloped in the same mystery as that surrounding the death and burial of their father.

No satisfactory explanation of this fact has been offered by any of the many Canadians to whom the matter was submitted. It is possible that deaths from small-pox were not recorded; that the fact they had occurred was suppressed. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* for June 7, 1843, contained the following notice:

"Died, in Sault-au-Recollect, 9 miles above Montreal, on the 24th. ult., Sarah Harmon, daughter of the late Daniel W. Harmon, formerly of Vermont, aged 26 years." Strangely, this brief mention is the only reference to the death of Daniel W. Harmon in any newspaper of the time that we have been able to unearth. Sarah, otherwise Sally, Harmon was born on the shore of Fraser's Lake, Northwest Territory,

February 10, 1817. Her death took place on the twenty-fourth day of May, 1843, and her father died some time before that according to the newspaper notice. A boy, Frederick Mortimer, who was born in Coventry, Vermont, died of the dread disease in March, aged fifteen years, and in the same month a daughter, Susan Elizabeth, also born in Coventry, died. She was ten years old. They, like their father and sister Sally, died in the Parish of Sault-au-Recollet. This we know, despite the absence of official death records.

On the twenty-eighth day of August, 1845, the widow of Daniel Williams Harmon appeared before Mr. Justice John Samuel McCord, one of the Circuit Judges of the District of Montreal and presented a petition which she by making her mark in the presence of a notary public. The document is officially designated as "The Petition of Mrs. Elizabeth Duval, now residing in the City of Montreal, widow of the late Daniel Williams Harmon, formerly of the Honble North West Company, and at the time of his death of the Parish of Sault-au-Recollet, Yeoman." The petition avers:

"That in the month of April one thousand eight hundred and forty three the said Daniel Williams Harmon departed this life, having issue of his marriage with your petitioner several children, two of whom are still minors, to wit: Stephen aged fourteen years and Abby Maria aged nine years, and to whom it is

necessary that a Tutor and Sub-Tutor should be named.

"Wherefore your Petitioner humbly prays to be permitted to cause a competent number of the relatives and in default of Relatives, of Friends of the said minor children, to appear before your Honors and give their advice in the premises."

On the same day, as soon as the petition was filed, there appeared before Mr. Justice McCord the widow, Elizabeth Duval, a number of persons including Calvin P. Ladd, of Montreal, an iron founder, son-in-law of the petitioner and brother-in-law of the minor children named. Others were, John McWattes, a blacksmith, Michael Guerin, a shoemaker, John Thompson, a shoemaker, John Kirk, a cabinet maker, Hugh McCollay, a joiner, and John H. H. Taffe, a merchant, all of the City of Montreal. They recommended that the Court appoint the mother, Elizabeth Duval Harmon, tutrix of her two minor children and that their brother-in-law, Calvin P. Ladd, be appointed sub-tutor. This advice was ratified and confirmed by the Court, which ordered:

"That the said Elizabeth Duval be and remain Tutrix to her said Minor Children and the said Calvin P. Ladd Sub-Tutor, which Tutrix and Sub-Tutor, being now personally present, have voluntarily accepted of the same charge, promising upon oath faithfully to discharge the trust reposed in them and the Tutrix declared she does not know how to write and

the Subtutor hath Signed.”

The following day, August twenty-ninth, 1845, an inventory of the moveable property belonging to the deceased Daniel Williams Harmon—there being no immoveable property — was filed, consisting of household furnishings, tools, utensils and farm animals, the total appraised value being ninety-six pounds, ten shillings and five pence. Both the widow and her son-in-law, Ladd, declared that they knew of no debts being due to the estate of the deceased, and that the estate owed to Calvin P. Ladd the sum of sixty pounds, eleven shillings and five pence. The animals were listed as one old mare, valued at ten dollars, or two pounds, ten shillings; one three year old colt valued at seven pounds, ten shillings; two three year old heifers valued at ten dollars each, total five pounds; two milch cows valued at thirteen dollars each, or five pounds, ten shillings; one hog valued at seven dollars, or one pound, fifteen shillings. Two dozen books were valued at six pence per volume or twelve shillings.

On the twenty-fourth of November, 1845, Elizabeth Duval Harmon, for herself, and as tutrix duly appointed of the two minor children, declaring that she had taken for her own use no part of the property belonging to her deceased husband, renounced formally for herself the *communaute de biens*, communion of property, which existed between him and her, on the ground that it was much more burden-

some than profitable. And for and in the name of the two minor children she renounced all claims to any part of the estate of their late father, on the same ground, that the estate was more burdensome than profitable. The major natural heirs, namely, two sons, John and Norman Henry, and two daughters, Mary Patience, wife of Calvin P. Ladd, and Almira Amelia, at that time unmarried, likewise renounced. The renunciation of John was by affidavit made in New York sworn to before the mayor of that city, W. F. Havemeyer.

These legal documents serve at least three purposes of some significance and interest in this study. They establish the fact that Daniel Williams Harmon died in the month of April, 1843, and that the place was Sault-au-Recollet. They appear to establish the fact that the real name of his half-breed wife was not "Laval," as all authorities have given it, but "Duval." That would seem to be the logical inference from the use of "Duval" in the important legal documents we have cited. She herself was illiterate, but she was accompanied by her son-in-law and her older children. Ladd was a business man. The circumstances would appear to preclude any belief that there was just a clerical error in writing the name. The name is spelled uniformly throughout the series of documents. Her name is given as "Lizette Laval Harmon" in the records of her death and burial, however. Lack of clarity in pronunciation may have resulted in La-val

being mistaken for Du-val — or, possibly, *vice versa*.

Finally, the documents give an impressive picture of the poverty of Harmon at the end of his life. The estate was miserably small. The inventory indicates that his humble dwelling was poorly and meanly furnished even for that place and date. It was not destitution, to be sure, but it was poverty by comparison with the standard of living he and his family had enjoyed in Vermont. At the time of his retirement from the North West Company he was prosperous and well off, and in Coventry and throughout Vermont he was regarded as a fairly rich man. We can only infer from what facts we have that he lost heavily in his business ventures at Coventry. That may have been the reason for his removal from there back to Canada.

The comparative poverty of his last years closely paralleled that of his associate and fellow explorer, Simon Fraser. The careers of the two men formed a strange parallel from cradle to grave. But when in 1921, the Hudson Bay Company erected a memorial stone over the grave of Fraser, in the little cemetery at St. Andrews, there was no such memorial to Harmon, for there was no one who knew where he was buried. The parallelism had ended. Other than the portrait of him in the museum in Bennington, there is no memorial to Daniel Williams Harmon anywhere.



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Simon Fraser

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## II

### SIMON FRASER

#### I

Every New Englander knows that the State of Vermont came into being as a result of a jurisdictional rivalry, started in the Colonial period, between the royal provinces of New Hampshire and New York, and continued throughout and beyond the Revolutionary War. In the midst of the war in 1777, the leaders of the settlers in the region involved in the jurisdictional conflict declared their independence of both New Hampshire and New York and proclaimed the creation of a new, independent and sovereign state which they called the State of Vermont — State of Green Mountains. They sought, and hoped to receive, recognition as one of the United States, the fourteenth. They had good reason to believe that the strategic position of the territory comprised in the new State, together with the important military contribution its citizens had made and were making in the War of Independence, would cause the rival States New York and New Hampshire, as well as the other eleven states, to accept, without too prolonged a delay, the independence of Vermont as a *fait accompli* and to welcome the new State as a member of the Confederation of States.

The conflict began years earlier, when Benning

Wentworth, Royal Governor of the Province of New Hampshire, acting under the authority of the Crown as set forth in his commission from the king, as he interpreted it, made land grants for the settlement of the area now comprising the State of Vermont. The township of Bennington was chartered in 1749 by Governor Wentworth, the area covered by the charter extending several miles westward of the present boundary, to a point twenty miles east of Hudson's River, as it was then called, and thus the township grant embraced most of the present town of Hoosick, New York.

Because of the unsettled conditions resulting from the French War, no actual settlement was made under the first New Hampshire charter grants. But following the end of the French War, in September, 1760, and the cession of Canada to England by France, settlement began and proceeded at a rapid pace. The actual settlement of Bennington began in 1761, twelve years after the New Hampshire charter was granted. In the meantime the Province of New York had challenged and contested the validity of the New Hampshire grants, claiming that there was no sufficient basis for the claim of that province to jurisdiction over the territory. The New York government claimed that, under the terms of a charter granted by King Charles to the Duke of York, in 1664, the region over which New Hampshire claimed jurisdiction really belonged to New York.

In July, 1764, an Order in Council of the Royal Government in London, decreed that the Bennington township and its settlers were under the jurisdiction of the Province of New York. Had there been no more involved than the change of jurisdiction, the settlers of Bennington would have been complacent, if not completely indifferent. But they were indignant and rebelled when the New York authorities interpreted the Royal Order in Council to mean that the township charter granted by Governor Benning Wentworth was invalid, and that in consequence the titles to their homes which settlers had acquired by purchase from the proprietors, were without value. This was not contemplated or intended by the Crown authorities. It was this forfeiture of their lands and homes against which the settlers revolted.

Prior to the act of the settlers in forming themselves into an independent State called Vermont, the whole region was called the New Hampshire Grants. Bennington generally was called "Bennington, State of New Hampshire," and in early conveyances of land titles and tenure the customary description was "in the town and county of Bennington, Province of New Hampshire." But that rule was not universally followed. There were among the settlers in Bennington some who believed that the jurisdictional claim of New York, would prevail. Some, and perhaps most of these people believed the New York claim to be better founded. Apparently also these people be-

lieved that New York would validate and confirm actual settlers in their titles to their homes even though the titles were originally derived from the irregularly granted New Hampshire charter.

Prudent people in Bennington in deeds conveying land titles, indentures relating to leases, and similar instruments frequently used the description, "Bennington, County of Albany, Province of New York." And even later, after the Declaration of Independence of the United States, it was not an uncommon thing for Bennington citizens to include in their legal instruments the designation "in the town of Bennington, County of Albany, State of New York." Some of the most notable and influential of the Bennington leaders, including such men as Captain Elijah Dewey and Moses Robinson, had their deeds and indentures made out in this manner.

It was not until the boundary between Vermont and New York was determined and settled, in 1791, that the present west line of the town was definitely and permanently fixed, and the claim of Vermont to most of the present town of Hoosick as a part of Bennington definitely quashed. Between 1765 and 1785 a resident living west of the present town line in the town of Hoosick might describe himself as living in Bennington, New York, Bennington, New Hampshire (up to 1777) or Bennington, Vermont. And conversely, a Bennington resident east of the present town line, might, after 1777, accept in everyday

affairs the description "Bennington, State of Vermont," but cautiously prefer the use, in legal documents, of "town of Bennington, County of Albany, State of New York."

## II

The foregoing rapid sketch of the historical background will enable the reader to understand how Simon Fraser, the noted Canadian pioneer and explorer, discoverer of the great river that bears his name, generally described his birthplace as "Bennington, New York," while his mother, Isabel Fraser, used both "Bennington, New York," and "Bennington, Vermont," in describing the place of her abode at the time of the Revolutionary War. She was not peculiar in this; it was common practice. The birthplace of the Canadian fur-trader and explorer was a farm, a short distance from the present town line of Bennington on the west, a tiny hamlet in the town of Hoosick which then bore and still bears the name of Mapletown.

His father's name also was Simon. With his wife and children Simon Fraser arrived in America from Scotland in 1773. He is said to have received a sound classical education and to have been unusually learned as a Gaelic scholar. He was one of the nine sons of William Fraser, of Culbokie, Strathglass, Scotland, and his wife Margaret, whose maiden name was Macdonnell, was a native of Glengarry.

Simon was the youngest of their sons. Two older sons, Archibald and John, fought under Wolfe at Quebec. The latter, John settled in Montreal and became Chief Justice of the Montreal District. Simon married, in Scotland, Isabel Grant, and, as noted,





SIMON FRASER



came to America in 1773. It is a family tradition that he brought with him what is described as "a manuscript of Ossianic poetry," purportedly an actual manuscript of "Gaelic originals which Macpherson claimed to have translated. Thus, if the story is true, the basic documentary material evidence involved in one of the greatest literary controversies of history, was for some time in Bennington, in the simple home of a Scotch settler in Mapletown.

Since few readers of today can be expected to know anything of this controversy, a brief outline of it may be helpful. In 1760-1761 and 1763 James Macpherson published three volumes of verse, which he claimed to have faithfully translated from old Gaelic originals of poems by a third century Gaelic poet, Ossian. Macpherson said that his verses were "extremely literal" translations of the Gaelic originals. In a short time Dr. Johnson, Thomas Gray and other eminent literary men of the time, challenged the authenticity of the "translations." Johnson and others declared that the "original texts" which Macpherson eventually produced were forgeries. The controversy was a bitter one. While it was pending, Macpherson died and soon thereafter a committee of scholars was named to investigate the entire subject.

In brief, the committee found that the manuscripts which Macpherson had offered in evidence as originals were, in fact, forgeries, written by himself. They found what they regarded as sufficient evidence

that Macpherson had somehow come across fragments of the ancient Gaelic Ossianic tales and poems, which he had utilized, but that these were few and slight, the alleged "translations" being in fact Macpherson's original work in an ancient style suggested by the few above-mentioned fragments. That verdict has been sustained by most subsequent authorities.

The fact that Simon Fraser was noted as a Gaelic scholar is linked to the famous controversy, and to the ownership of the Macpherson manuscript, by highly reputable evidence. Bishop Alexander Macdonnell, of the Church of Scotland, was first cousin, once removed, of Mistress Margaret Fraser, of Culbokie, mother of Simon, senior. The Bishop's father and Mrs. Fraser were first cousins. Midway between his home and the school where the future bishop attended as a boy stood the Fraser home, where Mistress Margaret Fraser a widow, lived with one of her sons and his family, including several grandchildren. Bishop Macdonnell wrote: "I myself saw a large manuscript of Ossian's poems in the possession of Mrs. Fraser of Culbokie, in Strathglass, which she called '*am Balg Solair*' (a bag of fortuitous goods). This lady's residence being between my father's house and the school where I used to attend with her grandchildren, at her son's Culbokie House by way of coaxing me to remain on cold nights at her own house, she being cousin to my father, she used to take up the *Balg Solair* and read pieces of it to me. Although a very young boy at the

time, I became so much enraptured with the rehearsal of the achievements of the heroes of the poem, and so familiar with the characters, especially of Oscar, Cathmor, and Cuthchullin, that when MacPherson's translation was put into my hands in the Scotch College Valladolid in Spain, many years afterwards, it was like meeting old friends with those I had been intimately acquainted. Mrs. Fraser's son, Simon, who had a classical education, and was an excellent scholar, on emigrating to America in the year 1774, took the *Balg Solair* with him as an invaluable treasure. On the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, Mr. Fraser joined the Royal Standard, was taken prisoner by the Americans and thrown into jail, where he died."

What led Simon Fraser to settle in Mapletown, Bennington, was the fact that several of his kinsfolk, cousins of his father, were already settled there. Frasers have been numerous in the locality and there are some descendants of the original family of Mapletown Frasers still living in the vicinity. As early as 1764 Hugh Fraser made a settlement here on lands which were clearly within the area of the township of Bennington chartered by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire in 1749. In disregard of the New Hampshire charter, Lieutenant Cadwalader Colden, of New York, in 1763-1764, made grants of the same lands and used the authority and powers of the Province of New York to make such grants affective. Thus it was that Hugh Fraser became the owner of lands

under New York titles which others claimed by virtue of older New Hampshire titles. Soon after the signing of the Peace Treaty of 1763, Lieutenant Hugh Fraser, then retired on half-pay, purchased from four different persons, five hundred acres of land at Mapletown. Hugh Fraser had served as a lieutenant in the famous 78th Highland Regiment, under the command of his kinsman, Lieutenant General Simon Fraser. With his wife and children, and his father who made his home with him, Hugh Fraser settled in 1764 on the property he had purchased.

From the outset he was highly unpopular with some, and perhaps most, of his neighbors. "Yorkers" were abhorred by the settlers who held New Hampshire titles. Fraser had done the unpardonable thing: he had become the possessor, by virtue of New York grants, of lands which had been lawfully possessed and held under a valid charter issued by a royal governor, and taken from the lawful owners by unjust might. He was subject to considerable ostracism, abuse and petty persecution. When the outbreak of actual war against the British occurred, Fraser became the target for suspicion and attack.

In 1775 he applied to the Committee of Safety in New York for a guarantee of protection in a "State of Neutrality." In return for his pledge not to do anything that would in any way aid the British, or hinder the Colonists, he asked to be given immunity. He was assured that "he might depend upon remain-

ing in a State of Quiet whilst he continued to give them (the American) no molestation." But he was suspected and harassed. In June, 1776, he was seized and taken under guard to Albany, given a hearing before the Committee of Safety, and then permitted to return home. He was again arrested and in November 1776 he fled to New York, leaving behind his aged father, his wife and four children. Eventually, after the Battle of Bennington, all his property except twelve acres and a small dwelling was confiscated. But that is another story with which we are not presently concerned.

It was an uneasy and difficult situation into which Simon Fraser entered when he settled in Mapletown in 1774. The name Fraser was the subject of an obloquy from which he could not hope to escape. Simon Fraser purchased a farm house and outbuildings, with a small acreage at a cost of two hundred and forty pounds, New York Currency. He had also taken on a "perpetual lease" about one hundred and forty acres of land, at an annual rental of one shilling, York money, per acre. This land was described as lying "in Bennington, Province of New York." Simon Fraser had a bad start.

The fact that he was a "Damned Yorker" was bad enough. When it became evident that he was also a Damned Tory, that he was on the side of the Crown, his case was much worse. It is not at all surprising that the Scotch immigrant who had so recently come

to America should have given ready adherence to the cause of the Royal Government in opposition to the Colonists. It would have been strange if he made a contrary choice. He belonged to a family that was proud of its traditions of loyal and honorable service to the Crown. There had been many soldiers in the family during the past century, including his own brothers, who had fought in the last French War under Wolfe at Quebec. Moreover, he had not been long enough in America to acquire a Colonial outlook.

Simon Fraser joined the British forces. He fought in the Battle of Bennington, and attained the rank of captain. The statement has been made by some writers that he was wounded in the Battle of Bennington, was made a prisoner and died from his wounds in prison. That is not an accurate statement of the known facts. When the war began in earnest, Fraser quickly made known his adherence to the cause of the Royal Government. He was active in rounding up such of his neighbors and friends as agreed with him, getting them to agree to join the British army as soon as this could be made possible. He was acting as a recruiting agent for Lieutenant Colonel John Peters, under the immediate direction of the famous Captain Justus Sherwood. Peters had been duly authorized by General Carleton to "raise a Regiment to be composed of Americans and to be called the Queen's Loyal Rangers. The officers to receive their commissions when the Regiment should be two



thirds compleat, Mr. Peters to have the nominating them." In July, 1777, Simon Fraser enlisted with a number of his friends, at Skenesboro. He was in the Battle of Bennington and he may have been wounded as tradition says that he was. But he was not made a prisoner at that time. He was among those who escaped by way of the mill bridge at Cambridge. It is evident that some historical writers have made the mistake of confusing this Simon Fraser, with the more famous Lieutenant-General Simon Fraser, who was wounded in the Battle of Stillwater and died from his wounds. The widow of General Fraser lived for many years in Saratoga, New York, and figured as defendant in a celebrated suit for breach of promise of marriage, when verdict was rendered against her and she was ordered to pay six hundred pounds damages and costs of the action.

Simon Fraser of Bennington was made a captain of his regiment. Whether he held that rank at the time of the Battle of Bennington or gained it later is not clear from the records that have been preserved. The presumption that he was a captain at the time of the battle is strong. His oldest son, William, also enlisted in 1777 in the regiment of Rangers commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Peters and was given the rank of lieutenant. This is officially recorded but the date and place of his enlistment are not stated in the record. The record simply says that he joined the regiment in 1777, that he performed other military service

and retired on half-pay. It is presumed, therefore, that he joined the regiment at the same time as his father and was with him in the Battle of Bennington. He went to Canada to live residing with his family at Cotteaux de Lac.

As early as 1775 Simon Fraser seems to have been summarily arrested by some sort of posse from Bennington and haled before some sort of tribunal. According to the testimony of his widow and his son William, a judgment was at that time rendered which was in effect a decree fixing the boundaries between Bennington and Hoosick. This decree included sixty acres of the best of Fraser's land in Bennington and said that, as such, it could not be covered by a New York patent, Bennington being chartered by New Hampshire. Thus a substantial part of the total holding of one hundred and sixty acres, more than one third of it, was confiscated. His widow could not dispose of it or realize anything from it when she moved away.

In December 1777, about five months after the Battle of Bennington, Captain Simon Fraser was arrested in Bennington, on orders from the Albany Council of Safety, on information received. The Council referred the case to the Albany Committee of Correspondence, which considered the case on December 24, 1777. The record for that date says: "Simon Fraser, an inhabitant of this State, who has taken a Commission under The King of Great Britian,

and joined his forces, having been apprehended and sent to this Board to be dealt with as they shall conceive proper, by the Council of Safety, Thereupon Resolved, that the said Simon Fraser be put in close confinement, there to remain till further information is received concerning him from the Committee of the District in which he last resided."

At the end of July, 1778, he was still in prison. His case had aroused some sympathy apparently. A petition for his pardon and release was circulated. This, however, aroused some resentment and opposition. At a meeting of the Commissioners for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, held on July 30, 1778, at Albany, the matter was up for discussion:

"A paper was laid before the Board under the Signature of John Patau (Patten?) and others setting forth that a Petition was carrying around in their Neighborhood for the Liberation of one Simon Fraser and declaring their Uneasiness thereat and entering into a Combination to lessen the Number of the disaffected by sending them Orders to move off and threatening them to Abide by the Consequences in Case of Neglect —

"The Board took the same into consideration and thereupon are of opinion that such Declarations are unwarrantable and tend to sap the Foundations of all Law and good Government (and) Resolved that the said Patau and others be informed that this Board will receive into their custody and charge all such dis-

affected Persons who upon Proof can be convicted of any crimes against the Liberties of America and that if they send any persons to the care of this Board that they send with them the charges against them properly attested."

Captain Simon Fraser did not gain his liberty. He died in Albany Gaol. His widow and the eight children, lived for several years after his death at Mapletown. Five of the children were still quite young when their mother took them to Canada, in 1784. Simon, the youngest child, born in 1776, was eight years old. Life had been hard for the family, what was left of Captain Fraser's property brought very little.

With her children Mrs. Fraser went to live in Glengarry, Ontario, a region that was being settled by Loyalists from the United States. The boy Simon was sent to Montreal to live with his uncle, Chief Justice Fraser. He went to school for seven or eight years and then, at the age of sixteen, he was articled, as the old term was, to the merchant firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company, who placed him in service with the North West Company, one of the two great fur trading companies of Canada. In 1802 he went to the Northwest country to superintend some of the operations of the company.

His oldest brother, William settled at Cotteaux de Lac. Their mother spent most of the rest of her life at Edwardsburgh, in the Eastern District. Angus Fraser, another son, also resided at Edwardsburgh.

### III

As noted in the sketch of Daniel Williams Harmon, there is a close and long sustained parallel in the careers of the two contemporaries, Simon Fraser, born in 1776, and Daniel W. Harmon, born in 1778. Both were born in Bennington, as it was then defined, not more than two or three miles apart. Both went to Montreal, and both found employment with the same merchant firm. Both entered the services of the same great fur trading company, the famous North West Company, and became noted explorers, whose travels and discoveries profoundly influenced the historical development of British North America. Both explored the same general region, their paths crossing occasionally. Both neared, but did not actually reach, the Pacific Ocean. Both became partners in the North West Company and both resigned or were removed from it at the time of its merger with the Hudson Bay Company, in 1821. Both wrote accounts of their travels of considerable importance and value, and, finally, both died in obscurity and poverty.

The parallelism seems much too perfect and extensive to be explained as simple coincidence. Simon Fraser was about eight years old when his mother took him away from Bennington to Canada. Daniel Williams Harmon was then only six years old. It is not altogether impossible that the two small boys were acquainted, but there is no evidence of it, nor can it be regarded as highly probable. It is more probable

that either young Harmon or some of his family was acquainted with the firm of McTavish, Frobisher and Company, and that this brought about his employment by that firm, the whole sequence of events thereafter being the logical, unpremeditated, consequences of that employment, young Fraser being also employed there. But there are questions that suggest themselves; questions we would like to be able to answer.

Young Fraser had been employed by the merchant firm some years when Harmon entered its service. That they became acquainted, either during their employment with McTavish, Frobisher and Company or earlier, may not be doubted with reason. But were they mere acquaintances or close friends? We know that as explorers later on the paths of the two crossed and they sometimes met as we learn from Harmon's Journal. There is nothing in what Harmon says to indicate that the two were close friends. Can it be that the stodgy and smug "editor," Daniel Haskel, felt that literary canons required the elimination of references to such matters? It is possible that unpublished papers of Simon Fraser which have been preserved may hold the answers to our questions. So far as this writer knows, no unpublished writings of Harmon have been preserved. Both men were friends of Archibald Norman McLeod, after whom Fort McLeod was named. Like Harmon, McLeod had a squaw wife, a Canadian French-Indian half breed.

Their son, Alexander R. McLeod, received his early instruction in English from his father's friend, Daniel W. Harmon.

The Lewis and Clark expedition across the North American continent, 1803-1806, authorized and supported by the United States Government, exercised a far-reaching influence upon the policy of the North West Company and upon the development of Western Canada. President Jefferson had long been in favor of an exploration to discover a land route across the continent and to increase our knowledge of the western country, including not only its topography and resources, but the life and ways of the western Indian tribes as well. The expedition passed overland through the Rockies, down the Columbia River to the coast. This was not the first span of the North American continent as many have stated: that had been accomplished a decade earlier by Alexander MacKenzie.

The directors of the North West Company viewed the Lewis-Clark exploration of the region as a menace to their interests. They feared that the great area west of the Rockies that had been traversed in the closing decade of the eighteenth century would be claimed formally by the United States, which event, if it happened, might jeopardise and seriously impair their fur trading interest.

#### IV

To meet this threat the North West Company ordered its agents, buyers, superintendents and others to meet at Fort William in a great conclave in the summer of 1805. It does not appear that Daniel W. Harmon was among those in attendance, but there is ample evidence that he was fully informed what happened. It was determined that Simon Fraser should equip a small expedition, consisting of about thirty men, to proceed West of the Rockies into the territory which MacKenzie had traversed and partially explored some years earlier. This region Fraser and his party were to explore further and occupy formally in the name of the King of England. This assertion of British Sovereignty was an event of much larger significance and importance than those who caused it knew or could have believed possible. It was one of those occurrences, a different shaping of which would have altered the entire subsequent course of history upon this continent.

Starting in the autumn of 1805, with his party of thirty Fraser established a post at Peace River, naming it Rocky Mountain Portage. There he left fourteen men and with the rest of his party proceeded up the Pack River and entered a small lake some seventeen miles long, not hitherto known, which he named Lake McLeod in honor of his friend, Archibald N. MacLeod. Here, on the lake shore, Fraser established Fort McLeod, a trading post to accomodate the trade in



furs with the Sekanais Indians. It was also to serve as a supply base for posts Fraser expected to be formed farther on. Fort McLeod was the first permanent post formed in the territory which later became British Columbia. Fort McLeod still exists, and is a memorial of the fact that Simon Fraser here made the first settlement in what has come to be a rich and mighty province.

Leaving three men at Fort McLeod, Fraser returned to Rocky Mountain portage, remaining there through the winter of 1805-1806. He had to wait there until the arrival of Archibald McGillivray who had been selected to command the post there. Another reason for the delay was the fact that any attempt to push westward required extensive preparation and planning. Fraser had to plan his itinerary guided only by the information he had gathered from Indians, no small percentage of which was wrong. Some things told by the Indians were what they had understood or heard others say, rather than what they knew by actual experience. And there were, inevitably, misunderstandings due to language difficulties.

Late in May, 1806, Fraser made a fresh start westward. The party left Rocky Mountain Portage on the twentieth of May and on the tenth of June came in sight of the Great River which Alexander Mackenzie had discovered and named. Fraser and several of his party went up one of the tributaries of the river until they reached a lake which Fraser named Stuart Lake in honor of his friend and companion, John

Stuart. Here he established a permanent fur trading post, which came to be known as Fort St. James. The party advanced to another lake, on which another post was established. To this lake the name Fraser Lake was given, and was also the name of the post.

Returning to the point of departure from the Great River, Fraser founded at the north of the Nechaco a new post, Fort George. Here his party met a party of Indians, a branch of the Crees, called Carrier Indians. They spoke a distinctive dialect and had many characteristics which distinguished them from other Crees. They dressed in skins of beaver, lynx and marmot. They were entirely unfamiliar with firearms. Terrified when Fraser's men fired several muskets in unison, and inclined at first to be hostile, the Indians became convinced that the pale faces had only friendly intentions. For the white man's trinkets they exchanged furs. Fraser recorded the fact that during the ensuing months while he remained at Fort George the Indians came to admire the whites and to manifest their admiration in many ways.

There is no evidence of reciprocal admiration of the Indians by the whites. In all his known letters there is no word that indicates that Fraser had any liking for the redskins, or any sympathy for them. On the other hand, contemptuous references to them are numerous. For a full year and a half Fraser's party remained at Fort George, trading with the Indians and gathering information.

## V

On the twenty-second of May, 1808, Fraser and twenty-one others set out from Fort George along the Great River determined to reach the sea. Second in command was Fraser's life-long friend and companion John Stuart, for whom the lake bearing his name had been named two years earlier. In addition to Fraser and Stuart, there were seventeen voyageurs and two Indians, who were needed as interpreters as the tribes known as the Tahowtins and the Atnaughs, through whose country they had to pass, spoke dialects that were different from any Indian language Fraser's party had hitherto encountered. From the end of May to the last of June the expedition endured great hardships and encountered many difficulties. Navigation of the rivers was possible only for short distances. There were many long portages, over which canoes and what provisions there were had to be carried. They had to depend largely on the Indians for food, including dried salmon, nuts, berries and dog-flesh, esteemed as a delicacy by the Indians.

On the second of July, 1808, the party reached the mouth of the river, to a point near the present city of New Westminster, where they could see the Georgian Strait which Captain George Vancouver had discovered in 1792. It was not until then that Fraser realized that he had been mistaken; that the river he and his companions had travelled since leaving Fort George on the twenty-second of May was not the

Columbia River as he had supposed, but a newly discovered river which now bears his name, Fraser River. It was a bitter disappointment when he realized that the sea upon which he and his companions looked was not the Pacific Ocean but only the Georgian Strait. It was even more disappointing to realize that the river, his discovery, would be of no value as a trading route. It was a vast gorge through high and sheer mountain walls of rock. Rapids and canyons were numerous and close making travel difficult and perilous. His main object had been to explore the possibilities of a trading route to the Pacific Ocean. In that the expedition had been a complete and costly failure.

Simon Fraser could not have realized then that this river, so useless as a trading route, as he perceived it, would some day become an important artery of trade, a link in transcontinental communication. About the time of his death, in 1862, work was beginning on the building of the Cariboo Waggon Road, which made it evident that the Fraser River water gap through the Coast Range could be utilized. The Cariboo Waggon Road took two years to build, 1862-1864. Then twenty years later 1883-1885, came the railroad. Today the two great continental railway systems of Canada reach the Gulf of Georgia through the Fraser River water gap.

Despite his disappointment occasioned by the discovery that it was not the Columbia down which his party had travelled so perilously, Fraser was anxious



SIMON FRASER MEMORIAL  
NEW WESTMINSTER, B. C.



to explore the region along the shore of the Gulf of Georgia, but that desire had to go unfulfilled. There was an invincible combination of adverse circumstances. First, the Coast Indians were fiercely hostile, more hostile than any Fraser had ever previously encountered. The Indians made desperate attempts to destroy the white intruders. Second, there was mutiny within the expedition. This mutiny might have been fatal to the enterprise, but it was settled, fortunately, and every man took an oath that he would "perish rather than forsake a comrade in distress." It was with the greatest difficulty that they made their way out of the region inhabited by the hostile Coast Indians.

By the middle of July they had reached Thompson River on the return journey, and were free from dangerous attack, the Indians here being friendly. By the last of the month they were at Quesnel, and on the eighth of August, 1808, they were back at Fort George, from which they had departed ten weeks earlier. For the next four years or so Fraser remained in the district which he called New Caledonia, employed in looking after the affairs of the North West Company.

## VI

No sketch of the life of Simon Fraser would be worthy of any attention if it ignored, or failed to describe, at least briefly, the disastrous occurrence at the Red River Settlement, which has been the subject of much embittered controversy: There was at all times a stiff rivalry between the two great fur-trading companies. When voyageurs of the North West Company met those of the Hudson Bay Company brawling and fighting commonly occurred. These men were rivals in a business in which the competition was fiercely keen and ruthless. But they had the common interest that fur traders and trappers and hunters, always had on this continent, in the United States as well as in British North America, the interest of keeping the greatest possible amount of territory unsettled, in a wild state. The fur-trading companies were pioneers. They contributed enormously to the development of both Canada and the United States. It was they who made the great explorations and discoveries that pushed the frontiers ever farther westward until the shores of the Pacific Ocean were reached.

They explored the unknown areas; traced and mapped the course of rivers and navigated them; blazed trails linking the navigable waters, establishing long lines of transportation; opened up trading routes; surveyed natural resources and, finally, supplied the knowledge of the speech and ways of the aboriginal



inhabitants that made possible the understanding of each race by the other. That Canada now extends all the way from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Pacific Coast, and that the whole distance is spanned by a great railway network, are results which the two great fur trading companies, particularly the North West Company, made possible.

But they did not promote colonization, the immigration and settlement of people. Every trapper was a foe to settlement, to the establishment of farms, villages and towns. These meant driving off the wild life, especially the fur-bearing animals. Farmers everywhere have been hostile toward trappers and hunters. The pioneer settler was quite a different type from the pioneer explorer and fur trader, with different economic interests and a different social philosophy. Conflicting aims and interests of the two groups contributed chapters to our own national story that make ugly and unpleasant reading.

In a strange way it came to pass that, while the younger of the two great fur-trading companies, the North-West Company, was naturally directed by the psychology and interests of the nomadic groups — trappers, hunters and fur traders — the older company, the Hudson Bay Company, suddenly switched and espoused the viewpoint and economic interest of the group of fixed habitations, the pioneer settlers, farmers, craftsmen, homebuilders.

Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk — the fifth to

bear the title — was born in Scotland in 1771. He was a man with serious mind and humanitarian interests. Stirred deeply by the poverty of the Highlanders who had been evicted from their homes and were in a pitiful plight, he urged as the only possible solution of the problem emigration at government expense. The government did not approve of this plan. He secured a large tract of land on the coast of Prince Edward Island, and in August, 1803, set forth with about eight hundred men, women and children, to settle there. The colonization of these people was successfully accomplished. Lord Selkirk returned to his home in Scotland and at once started to develop plans for a still larger colony.

Under the terms of its charter as these had been interpreted, the Hudson Bay Company was regarded as owning the land of the loosely and somewhat vaguely bounded area covered by its charter. The nobleman thought that he could take a short-cut to the realization of his ambitious new plan by the simple device of acquiring enough stock in the Hudson Bay Company to enable him to control the policies. He purchased one-third of the stock in the company and thereby exercised effective control. Then he purchased from the company a tract of richly fertile land, between the Red and Assiniboine rivers, in what was known as Rupert's Land. The land so purchased by Lord Selkirk had an area of about 110,000 square miles.

The first colonists arrived in 1811. They were Scotch Highlanders for the most part, but with a goodly number of Irish. They reached Hudson Bay late in 1810 and in the early summer of 1811 made their first settlement near the site of the present city of Winnipeg — the settlement which was at the junction of the two rivers, was called Assiniboia — sometimes spelled "Ossiniboia." Other large bodies of immigrant settlers arrived later.

The North West Company leaders were alarmed by the new settlement. They resented and feared the activities of the Hudson Bay Company in a region which they felt was far remote from its rightful sphere of operations, a region in which the North West Company had operated extensively for years. But there was an even greater and more serious cause for alarm. For reasons we have already discussed, the settlement of large bodies of colonists was rightly held to be inimical to the fur industry. The cultivation of the land upon what was, for the time and in the circumstances, a large scale, would soon put an end to trapping as a profitable enterprise.

Fraser was made District Commander with authority to promote, defend and maintain the interests of the North West Company. At the head of the settlement, with the title of governor, Lord Selkirk had placed Miles Macdonnell and commissioned him as magistrate. This was in the general pattern of colonization procedure on this continent. Soon there was

violence in the rivalry of the two companies. The case of the colonists held the greater claim to public sympathy and popularity. These people had migrated from Scotland, from the Orkneys and from the north of Ireland, faced and endured great hardships, established homes and communities and were engaged in the heroic task of transforming wild lands into a rich agricultural area. Not only had the colonists popular sympathy on their side, but in both Canada and Britain, the rapid and extensive colonization of the vast region was regarded as beneficial and desirable. Yet, despite all this, contemporary majority opinion, which later experience and scholarship have vindicated and sustained, was against the colonists and favorable, on the whole, to the North West Company's conduct. There has been much controversy about the issues that were involved, but there can be no sensible doubt that Governor Macdonnell and his settlers adopted a violently aggressive, provocative policy that was in large degree responsible for the tragic developments that soon ensued. Under Macdonnell's orders and direction the colonists siezed forts and posts belonging to the North West Company, with the provisions contained therein. Some of the forts they appropriated to themselves and occupied; others they burned down. Macdonnell issued an order that no one was to be allowed to take any food out of the territory over which he had jurisdiction, including an area considerably greater than the

actual settlement. This order was designated to make it impossible for trappers and voyageurs and other personnel of the North West Company to obtain food supplies, even the stores in the company's own trading posts.

Next, Governor Macdonnell had a force under his personal command to seize the stores in the post of the North West Company. Of course, the fur men resisted and struck back and, before long, gained the upper hand. Some of the colonists were beaten up and otherwise handled roughly; others were driven out and their homes burned to the ground. Some of the colonists "agreed" to leave the settlement and to proceed eastward under convoy toward Montreal to seek a new location. Governor Macdonnell himself was seized and taken to Montreal to stand trial for several offenses with which he was charged. It was an alarming situation but there was much worse to come, making the Red River affair memorable in Canadian history.

There is good reason to believe that Macdonnell's policy was in truth the policy of the Earl of Selkirk, dictated to him by that well-purposed but unfortunately unwise man. Be that how it may, there is one uncontested fact, namely, that the policy was amazingly stupid, and as dangerous as it was stupid.

It would take us too far afield from our present purpose to continue the narrative with anything like a detailed account of the struggle at the Red River

settlement culminating in the Battle of Seven Oaks in June 1816. Our purpose is the simple one of sketching in outline the life-story of one man, Simon Fraser, in whom we are particularly interested. It will be enough, therefore, if we take note that Macdonnell was succeeded after a short while by Governor Semple; that many new immigrant colonists arrived in 1815; and that there was a renewal of violence. The newcomers were opposed by the trappers and the fur traders. The most violent opposition, however, came from the *bois brules*. These people, offspring of white fathers and Indian mothers of the region, had an attitude that was different from that of the trappers and traders. These latter had no sense of belonging to the region, of being tied by the usual ties of personal residence — land ownership, inheritance and the like. The *brules*, on the other hand, felt that it was their land, the land of their mothers and their mother's people. It was an interesting example of assertion of property right by maternal descent. The attitude of the *brules* was that of aborigines generally.

When a body of *brules* was attacked at the beginning of June, 1816, by Governor Semple's orders apparently, and certainly by his people, there followed a bloody battle. The *brules* had started out from the upper part of the Red River toward Winnipick Lake to guard the property of the North West Company, an established post beyond the jurisdiction, such as that was, of Governor Semple. As the story was sub-







sequently told in official investigations, the brules were proceeding peaceably when they were fired upon by some of Governor Semple's people. Only a few of the brules were armed, but these returned the fire. It was admitted that to reach their destination the brules had to pass, for a distance of two miles over land which was within the claimed jurisdiction of Governor Semple by virtue of Lord Selkirk's purchase. In this bloody encounter Governor Semple and twenty-one of the other colonists were killed, and several others were wounded. Of the brules one was killed and another wounded. It was said that by this fight and by the starvation of the colonists in cut-off outposts, the total loss of Governor Semple's forces since the first of the year totaled sixty-eight men.

In 1817 Lord Selkirk himself returned to the settlement and brought with him the so-called "De Meurons," Swiss mercenary soldiers, eighty in number, to protect the colonists. He ordered the arrest of a number of men and sent them under guard to Montreal. Later Selkirk himself was sued by the North West Company, in three actions, and was forced to pay heavy damages to the company. He returned to Scotland in 1818, an embittered man, broken in health and spirits. He left Scotland and went to France to live, dying there in 1820.

## VII

There was no lack of error and wrong doing on either side of the bitter conflict. The men involved were tough, hardy fighters, inclined to primitive ways as are all whose lives are cast beyond the frontiers of civilization. It would be nonsense to acquit the North West Company and its partisans of all responsibility and hold that only the Hudson Bay Company and its partisans under Lord Selkirk's policies were guilty of wrong. The fact remains, however, when all mitigating factors have been justly evaluated, that preponderance of responsibility must be charged against the Hudson Bay Company.

That was the clear and just verdict of the official investigators and of contemporary public opinion. The North West Company and its leaders, among them Fraser, were subject to severe criticisms, however, which Fraser resented. He felt that the Hudson Bay people alone were guilty of any significant wrong. He rejected the offer of the honor of knighthood by the King, which would have placed him in equal rank with the great Mackenzie. During the latter part of his life he was destined to great unhappiness arising from his awareness of the fact that public opinion had undergone a change, so that it had come to be the prevailing judgment that the worst and prime offender had been the North West Company; that it had been a conscienceless aggressor and oppressor of innocent peaceable settlers. This shift of public opinion was

natural and wholly understandable. The name of the North West Company disappeared when the two great companies merged under the name of the older, the Hudson Bay Company. The growth of the settlements and the progress of Colonization of the Northwest in general had become the subject of popular interest. It had replaced fur trading and exploration in the thought and conversation of Canadians. For these reasons there was the inevitable swing of popular opinion and judgment from that formerly held. In the mind of Fraser, awareness of this change rankled as a personal injustice.

For the intolerable conditions that had prevailed so long and steadily worsened, union of the two rival companies was held to be the best, if not the only, remedy. This was accomplished in 1821. The two companies were merged under the name of the older and from that fact not a few writers have inferred that the Hudson Bay Company had swallowed its junior rival. The truth was almost the exact opposite. The reorganized united company had on its directorate a heavy preponderance of leaders of the North West Company. The name of the Hudson Bay Company survived, but little else remained of the older company. The name of the North West Company had been abandoned, but its essential being was maintained.

For some reason Simon Fraser, who was one of the partners of the North West Company was not in-

cluded in the new united company. It was announced that he had resigned but it is morally certain that he was squeezed out. Daniel Harmon, also a partner in the North West Company, "resigned" at the same time. Both were tendered polite compliments and dropped. Subsequent happenings make that clear and unmistakable.

Soon after his return to Montreal at the end of 1819, Fraser married Catharine Macdonnell, of Matilda, Ontario, daughter of Allen Macdonnell. The marriage took place on the seventh of June, 1820. They settled at St. Andrews, on the Ottawa River, where Fraser was engaged, over a period of more than thirty years, in a succession of business enterprises, one or two of them attended with slight success, but most of them sorry failures. Several children were born of the marriage, but only two were recorded in the Parish Register. These were, Simon William, born on the sixteenth of April, 1821, and Catharine Harriet, born on the fourteenth of June, 1827. Father Albert McRae, priest of St. Andrews Parish, is authority for the statement that there were several other children. There were long intervals when the small parish was without a settled pastor, during which times the registers were not kept. There was a son named Robert and another daughter, Margery, who died in 1870. Robert died in 1903.

In St. Andrews Simon Fraser was generally respected, a quiet, kindly man, an obliging neighbor,

good natured, but always very poor. From about 1830 to his death in 1862 he lived in constant poverty. When he spoke of his service with the North West Company, he would become excited and indulge in bitter speech, but otherwise he was genial and pleasant. He died on the nineteenth of April, 1862, at the ripe old age of eighty-six, and only a few hours later his devoted wife, Catharine, followed him in death. They were buried in the same grave in the little cemetery. Until 1921 the grave was unmarked by any stone. In that year the Hudson Bay Company erected a suitably inscribed memorial stone over the grave.

By that time nation-wide attention had been directed to the neglect of Fraser's memory, and attention had been focussed upon his important contribution to the making of Canada the great nation it is. In 1890 and 1891 the Canadian Parliament granted small annuities to his surviving son and daughter. To the daughter, Harriet, was granted an annuity of two hundred and fifty dollars, which she drew each year until she died in 1908. To Robert was granted an annuity of one hundred dollars, which he drew each year until his death, in 1903. In 1908 the City of New Westminster, British Columbia, celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of Fraser's reaching the place whereon the city now stands. As part of the celebration a bronze bust of Fraser was set up in the beautiful park overlooking the water that the explorer took

for the Pacific Ocean.

The journal in which Fraser recorded his wanderings was not published until twenty-seven years after his death. What caused the delay we can only surmise. What we know is that the report that Fraser made to the North West Company on the river that now bears his name was suppressed. At least, it was not made known or given any recognition. We know that Fraser was bitterly disappointed when he found out that the river he had thought was the Columbia River was in fact another river entirely, and that it was useless as a fur-trading route to the sea. Bitter as was his disappointment, the disappointment of his partners in the North West Company was as bitter and as great, if not more bitter and greater. It was more than a waste of money: it destroyed a confident expectation. The result inevitably discounted Fraser's expedition and that may have been the reason his account of his travels was not published until so many years later. It may also have been a factor in the adoption of a reorganization plan that left both Harmon and Fraser outside.

Long after his death the heroic and valuable work of Fraser as an explorer received the recognition that had not been accorded to it in his life time. The Bennington-born son of Loyalist parents is memorialised by those great landmarks of the Canadian Northwest, Fraser Mountain, Fraser Lake and Fraser River. Indeed, the whole vast and splendid Province of British



BUST OF SIMON FRASER MEMORIAL





Columbia may be regarded as his monument. His labors made it inevitable that Canada would be what it has become, a vast confederation of free, self-governing people, stretching from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Pacific Ocean. His right to be counted among the makers of modern Canada is clear and beyond challenge.



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## Notes and Acknowledgments

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## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### A.

#### THE HARMON FAMILY

1. John Harmon, b. in England, 1616; m. in Springfield, Mass., in 1640, Elizabeth ———. He d. in Springfield, Mass., March 3, 1661. His widow, Elizabeth, m. as her second husband, Anthony Dorchester, prior to 1664. He d. in Springfield, Mass., August 28, 1683. She d. in Springfield, May 16, 1699. This John and Elizabeth were the original American ancestors of the Bennington Harmons.

2. Nathaniel Harmon, son of above John and Elizabeth, m. Mary Skinner.

3. Nathaniel Harmon, son of Nathaniel and Mary (Skinner), b. in Suffield, Conn., January 15, 1686-87. He m. Esther Austin in Suffield, August 24, 1710. She was b. in Suffield, January 11, 1686-87. They had nine children.

4. Simeon Harmon, son of above Nathaniel and Esther (Austin), b. in Suffield, July 1, 1721; m. Mercy Spencer, in Suffield, March 18, 1744-45. They had six children. He died in Rupert, Vermont, in 1803, aged 82 yrs.

5. Daniel Harmon, son of Simeon and Mercy (Spencer), b. in Suffield, Conn., January 26, 1747-48. He m. Lucretia, daughter of Martin Dewey, in Bennington, Vermont, July 26, 1770. She was b. in Westfield, Mass., March, 1750. They had eight children, all b. in Bennington. He was a Revolutionary soldier and fought in Bennington battle. He died in Vergennes, Vermont, June 26, 1805, aged 57 years and 5 months. She died in Coventry, Vermont, February 11, 1829, aged 78 years, 10 months and 15 days. Their children were: Argalus, b. November 16, 1771; Martin, b. March 3, 1774; Calvin, b. February 2, 1776; Daniel Williams, b. February 19, 1778; Lucretia, b. March 2, 1780; Stephen, b. March 4, 1782; Reuben, b. May 6, 1784; Joseph, b. February 5, 1786.

6. Daniel Williams Harmon, son of above Capt. Daniel and Lucretia (Dewey), b. in Bennington, February 19, 1778; m. Lizette (or Elisabeth) Laval (or Duval — see text, *ante*) in Fort William, Canada, on Lake Superior, August, 1819. He died in Sault au Recollet, near Montreal, Canada, April, 1843, aged 65 years. She died in Montreal, February 14, 1861, aged 72 years. They had fourteen children, four of them dying in early infancy, unnamed. The other ten were:

George, b. in Portage du Fort, Sturgeon Lake, Northwest Territory, December 4, 1807. He died at the home of his uncle, in Shelburne, Vermont, March 18, 1813, aged 5 years, 3 months, 14 days.

Mary Patience, b. Stuart's Lake Post of North West Company, Northwest Territory, April 25, 1811; m. Calvin P. Ladd, September 9, 1831. He was b. in Haverhill, N. H., August 17, 1808 and was an iron founder in Montreal. She died in Montreal, September 27, 1861, aged 50 years, 5 months, 2 days.

Sarah (otherwise Sally), b. at North West Company Post, Lake Fraser, Northwest Territory, February 10, 1817; died at Sault au Recollet, near Montreal, May 24, 1843, aged 26 years, 3 months, 14 days. Unmarried.

John, b. at Fort William on Lake Superior, Northwest Territory, August 24, 1819; m. Mercy Anna Wines, in Vergennes, Vermont, October 1, 1846. She was b. at Orwell, Vermont, March 28, 1822. He was a merchant in Brooklyn, N. Y., where he died September 22, 1858, aged 39 years. Later Mercy (Wines) Harmon m. Calvin P. Ladd, of Montreal, brother-in-law of her deceased first husband. She outlived her second husband and died in New York City. John and Mercy (Wines) Harmon had three children.

Almira Amelia, b. in Coventry, Vermont, May 16, 1821; m. Cornelius Ryan in Burlington, Vermont, October 20, 1849. He was b. in Quebec, Canada, December 25, 1827. They settled in Montreal, Canada, where he was an iron founder. They had three children.

Henry Norman, b. in Coventry, Vermont, March 13, 1825; died in Montreal, July 29, 1850, aged 25 years, 4 months, 10 days. Unmarried.

Frederick Mortimer, b. Coventry, Vermont, January 4, 1828; died in Sault au Recollet, near Montreal, March 1843, aged 15 years, 2 months.

Stephen, b. in Coventry, Vermont, July 28, 1831; died in Lima, Indiana, May 19, 1849, aged 17 years, 9 months, 21 days. Unmarried.

Susan Elizabeth, b. in Coventry, Vermont, March 29, 1833; died in Sault au Recollet, Canada, March, 1843, aged 10 years.

Abby Maria, b. in Coventry, Vermont, July 27, 1838. Soon after the death of her mother, she moved from Montreal to Ottawa, Canada, where for many years she conducted a fashionable Girls' School. In September, 1904, at the age of 66, she committed suicide by drowning at Hull, just outside of the city of Ottawa. She was buried in the same grave as her mother, in Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal. She left a modest estate of an estimated value of about nine thousand five hundred dollars.



Note: In his Journal under date of February 25, 1810, Harmon noted the birth of twin boys, prematurely, on February 15. One of them died on February 22 and the other on February 24. This accounts for two of the four unnamed infant children. The statement that fourteen children were born of the union is believed to be correct. In another entry in his Journal, in 1819, Harmon says that "several" children died in early infancy.

## B

### PROVENANCE OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

An engraved portrait of Daniel Williams Harmon forms the frontispiece of his *Journal*, published in 1820. It is evident that the engraving was made from a painting. The fact that a portrait of Simon Fraser, similar in style, existed, apparently painted at about the same time, tends to confirm the tradition that the Harmon portrait was painted by a Montreal artist for the North West Company, conforming to a custom to have portraits made of all the partners.

The search for the original portrait from which the engraved frontispiece of the book was made, or for any other original portrait, did not establish the truth of the tradition that it was custom of the North West Company to have portraits of all its partners painted. There are many portraits of many men who were prominent in The North West Company and its great rival, The Hudson Bay Company, in the collection at the Chateau de Ramezay, Montreal, and elsewhere, but no portrait identified as, or supposed to be, that of Daniel Williams Harmon. In a search that extended all the way from the Chateau de Ramezay to Hudson Bay House in Winnipeg neither the original of the engraved portrait, nor any other portrait of Harmon, was found.

The portrait that appears in this book is a photographic copy of the portrait of Harmon painted by William Tefft Schwarz for the Bennington Museum. The engraved portrait frontispiece of Harmon's book was enlarged to about one-third of life size. With this as a basis, authority for features and expression, the artist had to rely in part upon his imagination, for details like color of eyes and hair, but augmented by careful observation of living Harmons of the same ancestry. It's authenticity as a portrait is beyond reasonable challenge.

The picture of the Harmon Inn, birthplace of Daniel Williams Harmon, was drawn for the author by Edward Sanborn, of Burlington, from an actual photograph of the old house as it was at the turn of the present century, before the details of its architecture had disappeared. It is an excellent picture of the historic tavern as it must have appeared when General John Stark made his famous visit.

The portrait of Simon Fraser is a photographic reproduction of the portrait painted by William Tefft Schwarz for the Bennington Historical Museum and Art Gallery. An extensive search which exactly paralleled that made for a portrait of Harmon was made in the case of Fraser. In this case, as in the other, no original portrait was found. The Librarian and Chief Archivist of the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Mr. Willard C. Ireland, was most helpful. We had been informed that there was an original portrait

of Fraser in the Provincial Archives. This proved to be erroneous. The facts were as follows: at the time of the celebration of the centennial anniversary of Fraser's descent of the river, held at New Westminster and referred to in the main text, an original portrait was displayed, owned by one of his descendants. Unfortunately the name of the descendant was not recorded, or at least is not now known.

At the time of the celebration, by permission, a photograph of the portrait was made for the Provincial Archives. Of that photograph a copy was made for us from the original negative. Another portrait, differing slightly from the one just described, is used as an illustration in *The Clan Fraser*, by A. Fraser, published in Toronto in 1895. The portrait by William Tefft Schwarz was painted from the photographic copy of the family owned portrait, furnished by the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, and the one in the Fraser book referred to above.

It is as authentic as any portrait of Fraser could be, except that coloration had to be largely a matter of guess-work. It is a pity that when the photograph of the original painting was made such details as the color of the eyes, hair, clothing, complexion, etc., were not recorded.

The photograph of the Fraser Monument at New Westminster, British Columbia, was made for this work under the direction of the author's companions

of the Royal Arch Masons Chapter at New Westminster.

The facsimile of a page of Simon Fraser's manuscript journal of his travels is from a photostatic copy supplied by the Reference Division of the Public Library of Toronto.

## C.

### AUTHORITIES

This is not intended to be a bibliography of the subject, and it does not list all the sources of information consulted and used, but only those which the writer found to be of material use and helpfulness, and upon which he has relied.

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J. S.

Bennington, Vermont  
December 26, 1949.

THE END





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